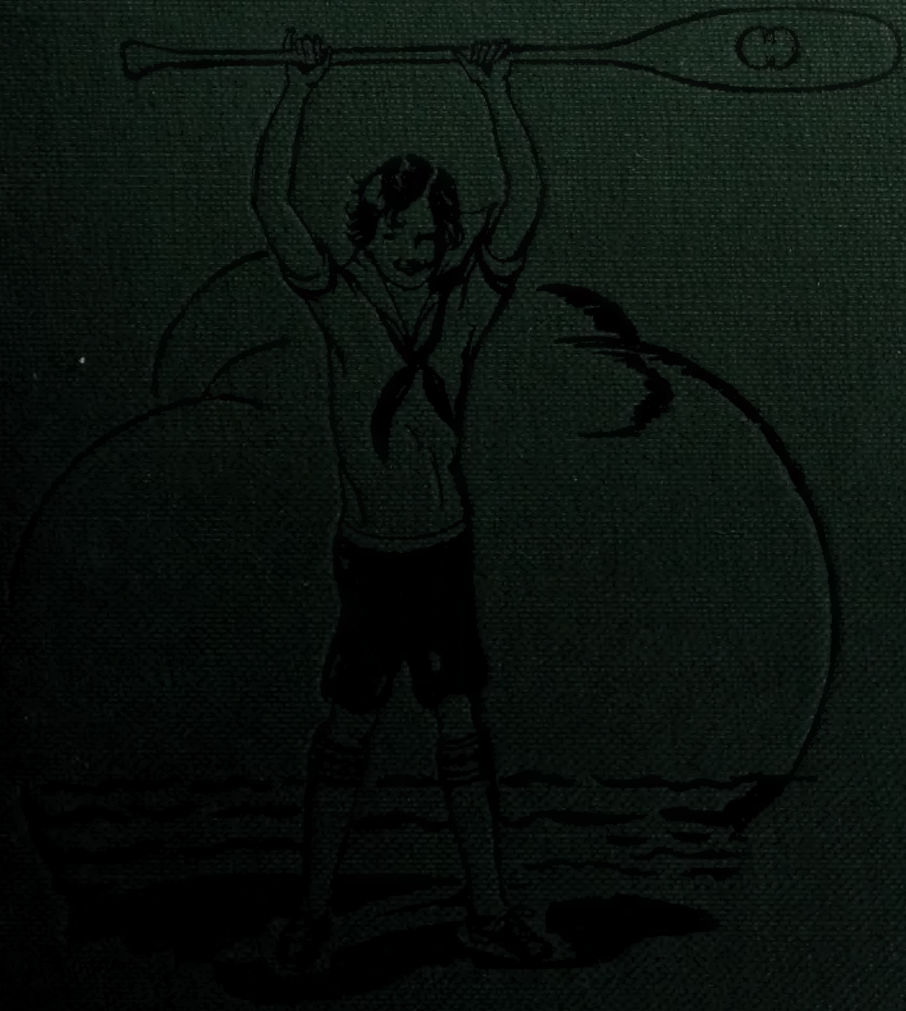

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CAMP CONQUEROR

JILL WAS ALMOST TOO EXCITED TO EAT. SHE WAS ACTUALLY IN ALGONQUIN PARK AT LAST! (*page* 193)

CAMP CONQUEROR

BY

ETHEL HUME BENNETT

Author of 'Judy of York Hill,' 'Camp Ken-Jockety,' 'Judy's Prefect Year,' etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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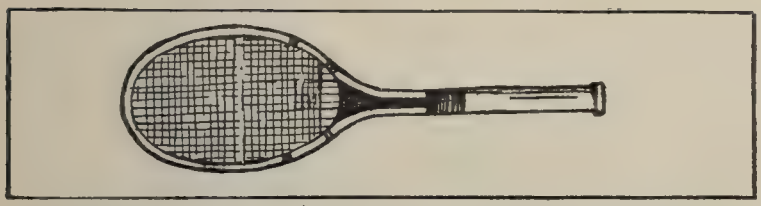
TO

BIG CHIEF

MARY S. EDGAR

Whose camp songs and hymns are loved and sung
wherever girls gather about a camp-fire

1800·13



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Drawn by Constance Whittemore

CHAPTER I

CAMP CONQUEROR AND JILL

'TRAIN for the North! All aboard,' called the conductor warningly. He stood, waiting patiently, while the noise grew louder still. This was not the first time his train had carried the special cars for Camp Conqueror and he was quite used to the hubbub which marked the departure of the campers. Perhaps he even liked it, for he smiled in a paternal fashion at the eager, happy young girls swarming into the coaches.

What a babel of voices! Good-byes were shouted by the cautious ones, who had already secured their seats, to envious friends who had come down to the station to see them off; loud greetings marked the meeting of campers who had hitherto been unable to find each other because of the crowd; shrill welcomings were cried as late arrivals forced a way through the groups of relatives standing by steps and windows determined to give one last piece of advice about the dangers of too much swimming.

The ten minutes' grace ticked by quietly on the conductor's big fat watch.

'All aboard,' he cried again and raised his hand for the inexorable signal.

'Wait, wait!' shrilled twenty protesting feminine voices.

He wheeled sharply and his eyes followed theirs.

A green-frocked, hatless girl was sprinting down the platform, her legs twinkling in a speed that put to shame the efforts of the Red Cap following with her bag.

The engine gave a preliminary snort and a quiver ran through the coaches; the campers leaned further out of the windows and freely speculated as to whether she'd make it.

Another jerk!

A—ah! Well run!

The conductor gave the signal, took the bag from the Red Cap and swung it and himself up the steps after this thoughtless young person who had dared to keep the train for the North a full thirty seconds beyond scheduled time.

The late-comer smiled ingratiatingly into those stern gray eyes.

'I'm frightfully sorry,' she said earnestly. 'And you are always so punctual, aren't you? Daddy told me. It was kind of you to wait. You see, I for-

got my tennis racquet and it's a specially nice one, so I just had to go back. Thank you *very* much.'

The Olympian aspect of outraged dignity melted under this handsome apology into a genial smile.

'Are you Wilhelmina Grier?' asked a brisk voice from the platform of the car.

'Yes,' said the green-frocked one, mounting the steps. 'But please don't ever again — I mean, nobody calls me anything but Jill. I forgot that Dad would write my luggage labels that way. It's a terribly long name, isn't it, even if it does belong to a perfectly nice grandmother.'

'I'll match you with another grandmother's name, Barbara, shortened to Babs — Babs Forsythe,' said the tall, capable-looking girl who was holding the club-bag. 'Come in, and we'll find a seat for you. You must be hot after that run.'

Inside the coach there was still a babel of laughter and talk; but numerous conversations hung suspended for a moment while bright eyes followed the tall counselor and the new young camper, who would probably be a wonder in a hundred-yard dash, but who was looking the least bit shy now as she discovered that she was being subjected to a polite and friendly scrutiny.

'Here's a seat,' said her guide, halting beside a very pretty girl. ''Lo, Gay, anybody claim this

place? May I introduce Wilhelmina Grier, Grace Russell? How many years have you been at Conqueror, Gay? . . . I thought so. . . . Well, three years' experience ought to make you a good guide for Wilhel — Jill, I mean. You might keep an eye on her, just in case she feels she must have another race with the train.'

'Did you plan to escape all the good-byes?' asked the pretty girl, smiling in the friendliest fashion at Jill and helping her stow away her bag, her coat, and her tennis racquet.

'Not exactly,' answered Jill, her shining hazel eyes noting how unusually lovely her companion looked when she smiled. 'Though I hate being kissed in a crowd, don't you? Mum and Dad left for Niagara Falls an hour before I did and I forgot my racquet. It was *too* bad of me, wasn't it?'

'Yes,' said Gay instantly. 'No, I mean.' A dimple deepened in one pretty cheek. There was something very persuasive, she decided, about this newcomer's voice, and that odd little questioning inflection made one want to agree with her at once.

'Do you want to read?' asked Jill, looking at the magazine on her companion's lap, 'or may I ask about the camp? I didn't know I was coming until the day before yesterday and I wasn't very keen

about it for I thought I was going with Aunt Alice and the girls to Kennebec Point. Mum decided *not*, quite suddenly, and remembered that she knew Miss Moore, and Miss Moore had a vacancy. Wasn't it lucky?'

'You were very fortunate,' said Gay impressively. 'There's a long waiting-list, for Miss Moore doesn't want Camp to be any larger than it is: she thinks eighty is just the right number.'

Gay's tone implied several things: that Jill must remember that she was only a new camper and very young at that, probably not more than fourteen, that she herself was sixteen, going on seventeen, was often taken for seventeen in fact, that what Miss Moore considered a right number *was* a right number, and that Camp Conqueror was *the* camp and much to be desired above such ordinary places as Kennebec Point where *any one* might go.

Jill 'got' it all and said apologetically, 'You see, I don't know a single thing about Camp Conqueror. Some of the older girls at York Hill went, but I've been away from school a year — appendicitis, and Florida, and Atlantic City — so I'm out of touch with things. Are there any York girls coming?'

'Not that I know of: that tall girl with the

smooth black hair is Lorry Reynolds of Saint Mary's School, Montreal, and the one with the blue hat beside her is from New York, and those two youngsters in front are new, twins, from some place on Long Island — the fair-haired, blue-eyed girl across the aisle is Gertrude Gilroy of Quebec. I met her first at Murray Bay where we have a summer cottage. There are quite a number of Toronto girls in the next coach; perhaps you'll find some friends there. Come and be introduced to this lot first.'

Jill was thrilled to be going about the coach under the wing of such a wonderful person as Gay Russell. Her guide was very popular, judging by the alacrity with which room was made for her on the arms of chairs, and the promptness with which chocolates were offered for her delectation. Jill wasn't surprised at this. Anybody with such deep blue eyes, such golden hair, such a gay smile, and such a delicious dimple, was bound to be very popular. And wasn't it nice of her to be so charming and friendly to a newcomer!

'We'll ask Babs if there are any York Hill girls aboard,' said Gay when they had reached their own seat again. 'Babs is one of our counselors, you know: she's a good sort. She and I swam across the lake together last summer.'

'You did!' Jill looked her astonishment and admiration, and Gay couldn't resist adding, 'Yes, I got my Blue for it.'

Jill's eyes asked for an explanation of this remark and Gay, nothing loath, proceeded:

'You see, we're divided into four groups for swimming by the colors of the caps we wear, white for beginners who can't swim beyond their depth, then, red, yellow, and blue according to what we can do. And if one can win a blue cap it means a credit point for the whole tribe, so of course I was awfully pleased. There are four tribes, too, Crees, Blackfeet, Chickasaws and Ojibways.'

'And which tribe do you belong to?' asked Jill eagerly.

'Oh, I'm an Ojibway.'

'Then I'll be one too — that is, if you don't mind.'

Gay smiled graciously at this artless compliment.

'You don't decide yourself,' she said quickly. 'One of the tribes will call you at the initiation ceremony. It's a very solemn affair, I can tell you.'

Jill's cheeks were very pink by this time. What a horrible *faux pas!*

'Seems to be my bad day,' she said apologet-

ically, and sighed. 'But I often have them, I'm afraid.'

'Oh, you'll find out all about things in no time,' said Gay, picking up her magazine. 'And you'll be just as keen as the rest of us, I can promise you that.'

Jill opened her book, 'The Four Feathers,' and went back to the hero whom she had left on the point of redeeming, by a very brave deed, one of the white feathers which had been sent him because of an act of cowardice; she had been very anxious that he should succeed, but her attention wandered now. Egypt seemed a long way off, and here, right beside her, was a wonderful person who was not afraid to swim right across a lake, and Lorry, down the aisle, loved to dive, had said she'd rather take a dive from the high ladder than do anything else in the world! Think of it! She herself would rather die at once than plunge headfirst into deep water. She hated deep water — hated it — and feared it.... And it was horrible to be afraid. Gay would probably despise her if she knew.

'I can't read either,' said Gay, suddenly closing her magazine. 'I wonder where Babs is. I want to ask her if she knows about the cabins for this year. I want to be in the Pagoda with Lorry and Betsy. By the way, I expect you'll be called Jilly.

We tacked a "y" on every one's name last year. I struck at "Gracey," however, and "Babby" would have been too ridiculous. I wish we could think of something new.'

'Why don't you have Indian names?' suggested Jill.

'Too much trouble,' said Gay lazily, 'they're too long.'

'Well — what about monosyllables — as we had at school in our crowd — Jan and Jo and Jay.' Jill's eyes danced. 'And Gertrude, Gee. O Gee!'

The two laughed and Gay promptly hailed Lorry and Gertrude and explained the proposition.

'Sounds good to me,' said Lorry. 'I wonder if we could get a monosyllable for everybody?'

'If we were stuck we might have letters of the alphabet like Em, and Bee and Dee,' said Jill.

'Bright idea!' said Lorry heartily, looking with increased interest at Jill. 'Wouldn't it be fun if we could add a verse to one of the songs at supper and let them know their new names right away! Who's got a pencil?'

Jill produced one from her purse, and a small notebook.

'We'll be sure to sing, "I wish I was a fish,"' suggested Gertrude. 'Why don't you try that one?'

'I wish I was a fish [hummed Gay],
I wish I was a fish,
I'd sail and sail in the deep blue sea,
I wish I was a fish.

Huh! I think that's rather a hard one. What about "Are you a camel and have you got a hump?" No, that's harder. You're not trying, Lor.'

'Have a new name, dear
'Twill do just as well, dear,'

sang Lorry after a moment's concentration. 'Silly, isn't it? We'll miss Molly dreadfully this year: she could always think up a good rhyme. I don't see who'll write the songs for our tribe now.'

'There's Babs,' said Gertrude. 'Let's go and ask about the cabins.'

Jill retrieved her notebook after Gay's hasty departure and sucked the end of the pencil thoughtfully. That first song had an easy rhythm. What would be good names to use as end rhymes? Almost unconsciously she jotted down — name, Jane, Dee, Gee, Tee *tum*, tee *tum*, tee *tum*. Wouldn't it be fun to write a rhyme for Gay!

She was still frowning and humming her stanza to see if it scanned when Gay returned, leaned over her shoulder to read the lines, and called to Gertrude to come and hear them:

'Your names are far too long;
They do not sound quite neat;
To say them seems such a waste of time,
So change them — *tout de suite.*'

chanted Gay softly.

'Everybody won't know the French for "immediately," but never mind that,' said Gertrude laughing.

'The second verse is better,' chuckled Gay. 'Look — "monosyllabic gem," that's quite good, isn't it?'

'Let's sing it to-night,' she continued. 'We'll give everybody a surprise. You come to our table, Jill. Who else had we better have, Gee? Betsy has a good voice, let's go and ask her. Don't forget, Jill, you're to come to supper with me.'

Forget! As if Jill could! Wasn't she the luckiest girl to be invited to sit with two such wonderful people! Just for a few minutes' work. Rhymes were as easy as easy. Gay could have done it much better if she had waited. Perhaps Gay would let her do some more for her tribe.

She looked so blissfully happy that one of the twins who was facing her now, smiled sympathetically. A nice smile, Jill decided, and nice twinkly bright eyes; but her sister looked a bit forlorn. Had any one been looking after the twins? She'd seen

Gertrude talking to them, and Babs, but perhaps they were frightened of Babs. After all she was a counselor and her voice was very brisk. She herself was more their size, though of course she was much, much, older.

'I'm a new camper too, Jill Grier by name,' she said, crossing the aisle and sitting on the arm of the twins' seat. 'I hardly know anything about Camp Conqueror, but some one has just been telling me about the colors of the bathing caps we'll wear and the names of the tribes we'll belong to. Did you know that the campers call Miss Moore, Big Chief? And they all think she's a splendid sort of person. I'm getting very anxious to see her, aren't you?'

'Tribes? Do you mean tribes of Indians?' asked the bright-eyed twin suddenly. 'Will you be in the same camp as us? Who was the pretty girl beside you? What about the bathing caps? Why is Miss Moore called a chief? Is she really a chief? Are there truly wild animals around the camp? Do we sleep outside in a tent?'

All this in one breath, or at most, two. The questions came popping out so quickly that Jill laughingly declared they'd have to start all over again, and first, would they tell her their names.

'This is Eunice, and I'm Abigail,' said the latter

young person with a slightly dampened air. She evidently didn't like her name.

'Too long for a summer camp, I fear,' answered Jill, shaking her head. 'We are all going to have names of one syllable only. What would you like to be called . . . let me see. How about Pop, because your questions popped out? And Eunice could be Pip.'

'Dandy,' said Abigail emphatically, giving a joyous bounce. She seemed to be the spokesman. 'Did we ask too many questions? We *should* like to know about the tribes. Will there be Indians all around us?'

Eunice's eyes interrogated Jill eagerly, though she said nothing, and Jill answered all the questions one by one to the best of her ability, told them about the rhyme she had made for Gay, and left them feeling very proud because they were in the secret and already had their new names.

Jill had just settled back in her own chair and was deciding that it must be nearly time for luncheon when she heard some one behind her say: 'Have I the honor of addressing Miss Wilhelmina Grier, late of York Hill School?'

Jill whirled about. 'Judy!' she cried. 'Oh, Judy! It's too good to be true! Are you coming

with us? Are you a camper? A counselor? Judy, what *gorgeous* luck!'

'I didn't guess that "W. Grier" was the Jill I knew at school,' said Judith, emerging slightly disheveled from an impetuous 'bear' hug. 'But I see you're the same old Jilly, racing trains and forgetting racquets and such. Time never was anything in your young life if I remember rightly.'

Jill grinned affectionately.

'Don't be too hard on me, Judy. I'm going to learn at Camp to be all the things I ought to be and ain't. I'm just full of good resolutions. You haven't told me if you're really a camper?'

'Yes, I was there last season and I'm very proud that Big Chief asked me to come back as a counselor. You'll love it, Jilly.'

'Anybody I know on board?' asked Jill eagerly. 'Is Jan here?'

'I don't think so,' said Judith. 'There was some talk of her coming, I believe, but she's not on the train list, certainly. But you'll make any number of new friends. It's the friendliest place.'

'Yes, I know that already,' said Jill happily. 'Gay has been lovely to me all morning; everybody has, but it's nice to have an *old* friend to start with, isn't it?'

'You're right,' said Judith promptly. 'Don't

I just wish I had Joy or Chris here! Now, what do you want to know about Camp? You'll love Big Chief, Jilly; she's something like Miss Meredith at school, but of course she's much younger, jolly and happy like one of us, and fair to everybody, and understanding — you'll see that in her eyes — she's got the most interesting eyes.'

'Judy, do you like looking at people's eyes too? Aren't they the most romantic, exciting things — and trying to guess about them and never being sure — well, only sometimes, and then it's lovely!'

'Jilly, what a lamb you are!' Judith smiled affectionately at Jill's incoherence. 'Please remember that it's hot — or at least that I'm hot — and that my poor old brain can't work as quickly as yours. Yes, I know what you mean — it is nice to be *sure* of some people. Big Chief is one of them — no doubt about that!'

'Judy, I want to be an Ojibway, *terribly*. What could I do?' Jill's voice was low and urgent.

Judith smiled again. Jill *was* funny, always so much in earnest about everything.

'Oh, I don't know,' she said lightly. 'Depends on what's the latest fad. Last year diving was the fashion and divers were most sought after of all the braves. There's the porter with "First call to luncheon." I must be off to my own coach.'

Diving! Jill's face fell. How horrid! How mean! Diving! Was there no other way to prove one's self a brave warrior? She must ask Gay.

Jill had been the last one into the coach as they left Toronto, and she was one of the first out when they reached the little station on the shores of the Lac du Conquérant. Would Big Chief really be as nice as Judy had said?

There were several figures in the trim camp uniform of cool green linen on the platform, but Jill's quick glance found Big Chief at once, and as she was warmly welcomed she looked right into those eyes Judy had told her about. She nodded her head as she watched the slight figure being almost overwhelmed by the tumultuous greetings of her big family. Judy was right; one could be certain of understanding from Big Chief; her eyes were kind and — *sure*. She must find another word for that.

Her companions had proved so interesting on the journey that Jill had paid little attention to the country through which the express train had passed so swiftly. Now she turned and looked about her and at the first glance uttered an involuntary exclamation of surprise and joy. The scene which lay before her was so unlike anything that she had ever seen, that she might almost have stepped into a new world.

'Pretty nice, eh?' asked Judith, stopping for a moment beside Jill.

'Nice, Judy? It's — it's *gorgeous!* Why didn't you tell me how lovely it was! I've seen woods and forests before now, but nothing like these trees. . . . They're so big — and their tops look solid enough to walk on, they're so close together — and they seem to stretch for miles and miles.'

'They do,' laughed Judith. 'Miles and miles and miles! You are looking, mademoiselle, into one of the greatest of forest reserves — I forget how many thousand square miles of virgin forest — and how many hundred lakes — none of them lovelier than our own little Lac du Conquérant. Isn't it a beautiful blue! It's luck, the station being on a height so you can see over the tree-tops.'

'Where is the camp from here?' asked Jill eagerly.

'Across this end of the lake,' answered Judith, picking up a couple of bags which lay stranded on the platform. 'You can see the stone chimney of the Hall — there — and there are farms, pioneer farms, on that side — Thanks, Jilly, take them over to that big wagon yonder, and I'll gather in some more.'

A long string of farm wagons, motors, and hay-

carts was drawn up on the other side of the station and to them the campers were already busily carrying their luggage.

The campers seemed to be on the friendliest terms with the sunburned, sturdy-looking farmers who had taken a holiday to drive in — some of them from long distances — to help Miss Moore transport her big family to the camp, some seven or eight miles distant.

There was a great buzz of conversation and hearty greetings. It was: 'Hello, Mr. Simpson! How's Dot? Has she read them *all?* That's splendid!' and, 'Mr. Soanes, how *is* Peggy? Can she really walk?' and, 'Give my love to everybody, Mr. Macdonald, please. Bring them all to see us soon.'

'We have a picnic every summer for the children who live about here,' explained Gee, who found Jill standing beside her. 'And we each adopt one of them for Christmas time. My little girl, Susan, is such a lamb, but lame. Uncle Bob is curing her. We had her down to the city for a month last winter.'

'Come on in the hay-rack,' called Gay, who dashed past at this moment. 'We're starting first.'

Jill and Gee had just time to scramble in, and

away went the cart along a narrow, sandy road which wound through the forest.

Hay-carts do not boast springs, and the road was none too smooth, but nobody minded the bumps and the bounces, and the driver was urged to 'put on speed.'

Chipmunks and chickadees fled before the laughter and babel of talk; balsam and pointed fir growing close on either side of the road filled the air with delicious fragrance. Oh, how good this air smelt and tasted!

The road dipped into a valley, a dim, quiet retreat, climbed around a heavily wooded hill, and entered great, rustic gates which bore the legend, 'Camp Conqueror.'

There was a great shouting as the gates were passed, and excitement mounted high as the road twisted and turned through the last long stretch of woodland, and then, there beyond the last bend, were the blue waters of the lake, and the comfortable-looking white camp buildings in full view with a group of counselors waving a welcome.

What a happy hubbub of greetings as each group arrived! How glad everybody was to be back again!

Then came a rush on the part of the knowing ones to the bulletin-board where the list of cabins

was posted. Jill ran with the others, anxious to know her fate. Loud cries of delight and wails of disappointment greeted the reading of the lists. Jill was one of the jubilant ones as she saw: 'The Wigwoo: Grace Russell, Wilhelmina Grier, Gertrude Gilroy.' Gay made no attempt to conceal *her* disappointment.

'I asked at the end of last summer to be in the Pagoda with Betsy and Lorry — it's a dandy little place right next to the Senior Camp. If Betsy and Lorry are there, *why* do you suppose I'm not?'

'Big Chief probably thought you'd have a bad influence on the Seniors,' said Gertrude. 'Cheer up. This isn't bad: I always thought the Wigwoo had the nicest view! And we can call ourselves "Wigwoos," that's nicer than "Pagodas." "Wigwoo" is Ojibway for "birch," Judy says. . . . Glad you're going to be with us, Jill. Got your bathing togs in your bag? Good, then let's be the first into the water!'

Away they raced to one of the snug little rustic cabins on the hillside. Jill entirely agreed with Gertrude that the view *was* perfectly lovely and the cabin as cunning as could be, and her enthusiasm was so genuine and her laughter bubbled over so spontaneously that Gay's ill-humor vanished as if by magic, and the three made such good time that

LOUD CRIES OF DELIGHT AND WAILS OF DISAPPOINTMENT GREETED THE READING OF THE LISTS

they were down on the beach before any one else.

A swimming instructress in her bathing suit was already on the dock ready to give out caps.

'Here's another candidate for a Blue, Miss Dunstan,' said Gay wickedly, as she introduced Jill. 'She's a wonder for speed!'

'But she prefers land,' said Gertrude quickly, 'and so do I, as you know, Dunsey dear.'

Miss Dunstan's blue eyes twinkled merrily as she handed Jill a white cap, Gertrude a red, and Gay a blue one.

'I wonder at your taste! But you'll improve,' she said gayly, and then added teasingly, 'Look what we've done with Gay!'

Gay grinned good-naturedly, ran out to the diving-ladder, poised, and shot down into the water with a swift, graceful flight.

'Nice little dive,' said Gertrude, not at all enviously. 'Gay says I must get into the yellow-cap class this season, for the honor of the Ojibways. I tell her there's no "must" about it, but she's a very fierce brave, and tries to bully me. O-o-h! Isn't this water great!'

Jill, bobbing up and down and washing her face again and again agreed enthusiastically. Gertrude was a dear, she decided. She had the calmest blue eyes and the quietest voice. *What*

a lot of people there were in Camp! All sorts and sizes. The noise was almost deafening now. Everybody was in the water laughing and shrieking at everybody else. But very happy and jolly. Wasn't she the lucky girl to be able to get that vacancy! Oh, very lucky!

Supper was a gay meal that night. Every one confessed to a sudden and immediate Camp appetite, and certainly, the way in which chicken pie and hot muffins and fruit salad disappeared seemed to be a quite sufficient proof of the assertion. The prettily decorated tables were set in the big airy hall which was really like an out-of-doors dining-room, for the wooden shutters which formed its sides were never let down except in very stormy weather.

With the clearing away of the first course, songs were started by different enthusiasts and various favorites called for. Jill waited in great excitement until she heard the now familiar line, 'I wish I was a fish,' and felt a thrill down to her toes as Gay gave a signal and the six who were in the secret sang Jill's additional verses:

'Your names are far too long;
They do not sound quite neat;
To say them seems such a waste of time,
So change them *tout de suite.*

'We wish you were called Jane
Or something short like Em,
We'd like you all to curtail your name
To a monosyllabic gem.

'There's Pop and Pip and Jill,
There's Gee and Gay and Pat,
There's Lor and Bet — now get busy all.
Make *your* name short like that.'

This effort was received with much laughter and applause and the singers were obliged to repeat the last stanza.

'Not a bad idea,' was the general opinion, and the owners of difficult names which were not 'quite neat' sought advice from their neighbors as to the best way of turning theirs painlessly into a 'monosyllabic gem.'

After supper the campers went back to their cabins to unpack and see that their uniforms were ready for the morning — some of the old campers were already in knickers — and then, as the sunset faded into a tender, rosy glow, in twos and threes they drifted into the Lodge where Miss Moore had invited them to come for games.

Gertrude — hereafter to be called Gee — and Gay had gone to visit Lorry at the Pagoda, so Jill went down the path by herself and joined a little group who were evidently on their way to the

Lodge. The central point of interest in the big room was an immense fireplace built of rough-hewn granite brought from a near-by quarry. As often happens on these far northern lakes, the night was already chilly although the day had been warm and bright, so a cheerful fire of birch logs was crackling on the big open hearth. Every one was as friendly as possible, and the games were very evidently planned to help the new campers get acquainted. Jill's bright eyes found any number of interesting faces that she wanted to know more about. But wouldn't it have been lovely if Jan had been here?

The music began again and brought her attention back to the game: they were going to see in a moment or two how many names the new campers could remember. 'J. McNeil,' read the card pinned on the shoulder of Jill's partner.

Jill looked up politely, ready to say, 'Reminds me of a friend of mine.' But she wasn't polite at all: she gave a shout of joy and then enveloped 'J. McNeil' in a stifling hug. 'Jan! Jan! Are you *really* going to be here? But of course you are. Come and tell me.'

She dragged her old friend out of the crowd of the dancers and stared at her as if she couldn't believe her eyes.

'We motored up,' explained Jan, smiling contentedly, 'and had engine trouble: so we're late.'

'Have you a cabin yet? There's an empty bed in mine. Oh, *Jan!* Let's ask Miss Moore right away.'

Miss Moore smiled into the eager, shining eyes.

'Old school friends?' she said, 'then it seems a fine plan. Mary Sedgwick was to have had that cot, but she's very late, so we'll give it to Janet instead.'

Presently when the judges had announced the result of the competition, cocoa and biscuits were passed around, a good-night song was sung, and then every one went out into the beautiful summer night and stood looking across the lake to the western sky still exquisitely flushed and luminous with the after-glow of the sunset.

The chattering and laughing ceased, and at a signal from Big Chief slowly and seriously Taps was sung:

'Day is done,
Gone the sun
From the hill,
From the lake,
From the sky;
All is well,
Safely rest,
God is nigh.'

Arm in arm with Jan and Gay, Jill listened to the beautiful words. To-morrow she, too, would sing.

CHAPTER II

UPS AND DOWNS

A BUGLE-CALL next morning brought Jill out of happy dreams with a suddenness that made her rub her eyes in astonishment when she opened them, for not ten inches away from her face, on the other side of the mosquito netting, were the bright, inquisitive eyes of a little chipmunk.

Jill winked at him first with one eye and then with the other, a trick of which she was inordinately proud, and then giggled to see how quickly he fled when she put out her tongue at him. She felt ridiculously happy. Oh, how good everything smelt! . . . That was the nicest thing of all about sleeping out of doors. Jill began to count the pleasant odors; bracken and balsam were easy, but there was something sweet and spicy that she didn't recognize. She sniffed daintily.

'Jilly, what in the world are you doing? New sort of morning exercises, or what? Eyes, tongue, nose!'

Jill turned on her elbow and smiled into Jan's brown eyes.

'Jan, I do love you,' she said solemnly. 'Isn't it a gorgeous morning!'

'Can't be morning,' declared Gee firmly, her eyes still shut.

'Sun shining, birds singing, water freezing,' chanted Gay, jumping out of bed. 'Who's coming for a dip?

'Where, oh, where is my bathing cap?
Oh, where, oh, where has it gone?' . . .

. . . 'With its crown that is pinky,
And its bow that is dinky,
Oh, where, oh, where has it gone?'

improvised Jill instantly. ''Scuse me, Gay. It's under your bed, I think. Are we all going in? Come on, Jan. Race you to the beach.'

The Wigwoos were not the only campers who were beginning the season with good resolutions about getting up the moment the bugle sounded. Little groups were emerging from all the cabins, and some very prompt persons were already in the water.

Jill won her race to the beach, took her bath in record time, and was dressed when the others returned to the cabin. The chipmunk had gone, but in his place on the balsam bough sat a white-throated sparrow singing his clear, flute-like song.

'Lovely,' said Jill softly, as he flew away. 'I never saw you before, but I hope we'll get better

acquainted. Jan, isn't it exciting having the out-of-doors crowding into one's bedroom like this! Birds and beasts and flowers! Did you smell the balsam? Let's make pillows of it to send home. Oh, Jan! Aren't you happy? Aren't you frightfully happy!'

'Well, not frightfully,' said Jan, grinning affectionately at Jill's enthusiasm. 'But quite moderately so, and quite immoderately hungry. The fresh air has gone to your head and to my tummy, I guess.'

Jill's quick laugh bubbled out again and Jan's witticism must be repeated to Gee and Gay who arrived just at this moment, so that they might all laugh once more.

Jill flitted around outside the cabin and in a few moments had gathered a posy for each of the others: wild roses for Gay to match her lovely cheeks, harebells for Gee, for their daintiness would accord with hers, black-eyed Susans to remind Jan of old times at school, and a bit of sweet-smelling bergamot for herself.

'Looks as if you knew how to find flowers,' said Gay, pinning on her fragrant blossoms. 'There are plenty of 'em around here, and if you like hunting for orchids and rare things you should join the Naturalists' Club. We had some fine hikes last year.'

'Could I?' asked Jill eagerly. 'I'd love to. My cousin Sam is awfully keen about botany and he made me interested too. How does one join the club?'

Jill didn't want to make a second mistake about joining before she was invited.

'Come with me after breakfast,' said Gay, putting one arm around Jill's shoulders. 'Miss Maxwell's new this year; came over from England just to see what our flowers were like, and what camping was like too, I guess. She seems nice. I had a good look at her last night.'

The bugle sounded again and Jill gave a little skip of joy. 'Come on, Jan,' she called. 'There's the breakfast bell. Let's race.'

'Patience, my child,' said Gay with mock severity. 'You must learn at Camp Conqueror to curb your appetite and practice self-control. That is not a bell, but the bugle, blown once more to announce the fact that we must hie to the flagpole — and without delay.'

In front of the Lodge the campers were forming a great circle. Big Chief and several of the counselors were there already and Di Harris, chief of the Ojibways, held the flag rolled in her hand. Presently, when all the campers were assembled, Di called 'Attention,' stepped up to the pole, tied

the flag carefully to the rope on the pulley, and pulled steadily. Up, up, went the flag, followed by eighty pairs of eyes, and then, when it neared the top, as if at some secret signal from Di, out it flew on the breeze ready to receive the morning salute.

'Several of last year's campers,' said Big Chief, 'have asked that we may begin this season with "Salutation to the Dawn." So let us say it together and perhaps by to-morrow morning the newcomers will have learned it.'

Together they repeated the beautiful lines, and the Lord's Prayer, and then were dismissed for breakfast.

'Do we have to learn poetry to say *every* morning?' asked Jan as they went up the hill to the Hall. There was consternation in her voice.

Gee grinned. 'I don't wonder you feel worried if you think that. No, my dear. That's a special favorite of Big Chief's, and we learn it if we're new to camp, and say it together about once a week. It's queer poetry, isn't it?'

'It's lovely,' declared Jill enthusiastically. 'Say the last part again, please.'

'For Yesterday is but a Dream,
And To-morrow is only a Vision,
But To-day well-spent makes
Every Yesterday a Dream of Happiness
And every To-morrow a Vision of Hope,
Look well therefore to this Day!'

quoted Gee obligingly. 'Yesterday does seem like a dream, doesn't it? I can't believe that twenty-four hours ago I was in a big hotel ordering breakfast and wondering if I had time to do a little more shopping before train time.'

Jill looked astonished, and then laughed aloud. 'Only twenty-four hours ago! I feel as if I'd been here a week! And I didn't want to come to camp at all and I didn't dream that Jan was coming and I'd never slept outside before and' — solemnly — 'I never knew what it was to be really and truly *hungry*. Race you to the table, Gee!'

There was no singing at this meal until big bowls of porridge and plates of bacon and toast had disappeared and then Gay began the favorite:

'Are we happy, are we happy?
Hear us roar, hear us roar!
Make it good and snappy!
Make it good and snappy!
Just once more,
Just once more.'

Table after table took up the round until every camper was asking a question to which no answer was needed, so obvious was it to any and every one that they were entirely and completely happy.

Big Chief outlined the order of the day: unpacking and tidying of cabins, games until dinner,

followed by rest hour and water sports; Miss Dunstan and Judith Benson would be at the dock all morning to give out caps; all newcomers would receive white bathing caps until they had passed certain tests, and they must *not* use rowboats or canoes until they had satisfied Miss Dunstan as to their ability to swim.

Jill's high spirits suffered an immediate depression. That horrid old swimming and diving again! No going out in boats without satisfying . . . oh, dear! She'd have to stay away from the water altogether. . . . But Gay said she must get *at least* a red cap, that was the third lowest. . . . Oh, dear! . . . She just *couldn't* go into deep water. . . . But Gay . . . Anyway, there would be lots of other fun: she did hope Gay would play tennis with her . . . perhaps they could have a game after the cabins were in order.

To her eager inquiry, Gay was quite gracious; it might be a bore . . . Jilly was such an infant, but one must do one's best for new campers in their first week.

'To be sure we can!' she said promptly. 'We four Wigwoos . . . you and I can beat Jan and Gee . . . a love game . . . I'll put our names on the list . . . eleven sharp; mind you're ready.'

Jill rushed off to tell Jan. Jan, who was already

making her bed, received the news quite calmly.

'All right, I'll be ready,' she said, tucking in the blanket smoothly and firmly. 'There'll be time to see the horses first. Are you going to take riding lessons, Jilly?'

'I didn't know we could. How thrilling! I'll have to write to Mum about it. Are you?'

'Going to begin to-morrow,' replied Jan promptly. 'Judy said she'd put down my name. And I must see about getting my cap this morning. Miss Dunstan is quite keen about good style in diving, Gee says. Lorry offered to take me out to the raft this afternoon. Here, I'll show you how to make a bed properly. . . . You never could do it to please Judy, I remember.'

Jill watched Jan admiringly. How neat and deft she was in all her movements. Jan did everything well and never forgot things or left them unfinished, and she was always so . . . so wise about things. . . . And she was nice to look at, too, all brown: brown hair, brown skin, and brown eyes. . . . How were Jan's eyes different from Betsy's and Lorry's? . . . they were brown too . . . but quite, quite, different. . . .

'You haven't heard a word I was saying!' Jan's voice was indignant.

Jill was conscience-stricken.

'And it was about "hospital corners" or something very important, wasn't it, and I was thinking about your eyes, but I'll do it all over again, Jan . . . I *do* want to be like you.'

With a sweep of her arms Jill had the tidy blankets on the floor, and Jan laughed so wholeheartedly that Jill must perforce laugh too, and then she tumbled over on the blankets where she continued to sit and expound to Jan how she intended to become very tidy indeed, and make the Wigwoo the neatest and sweetest cabin in the whole of Camp.

'Them's the right sentiments,' commented Gay, coming in with her arms full of chintz draperies. 'And here's part of the wherewithal. I had these curtains and things last year. Where's Gee, the lazy beggar? I thought she'd have the beds made, at least.'

It was fun setting up housekeeping in the Wigwoo. The four cots fitted in snugly under the big windows which almost completely occupied three of the walls; there were neat little dressing-tables made of smooth white wood with rustic supports, hanging shelves for books and other treasures, racks for shoes, and a couple of canvas chairs where they could take their ease.

Gay's pretty woodsy chintz covered all the cots

and the dressing-tables. Gee made an extra pair of curtains into pillow covers while Gay and Jill hung the curtains, and Jan contrived a clever birch-bark toothbrush holder for each table and mended the towel-rack. They were feeling quite proud of the result of their labors when Judy looked in on her way to the playing-fields.

'Good work,' she said heartily. 'You're as neat and compact as a ship's cabin, and much prettier. Bee Binscarth will be along to-morrow and I hope you'll look as nice then as you do now. If you keep up the good work, who knows but what the Wigwoo may get the Cup. I hear Dee has decided that the Music Box must have that honor.'

'Music Box nothing,' said Gay firmly as Judy disappeared down the path. 'We just must have that cup for the honor of the Ojibways. Of course I know you two are not in a tribe yet, but wait until you're "called" and then you'll see how important it is.'

'But what's a tidy cabin got to do with the honor of the Ojibways?' asked Jan somewhat skeptically.

'Everything we do counts,' answered Gay impressively. 'You see, it's like this: we divide up into four tribes and a silver cup is given to the tribe that gets the most points . . . land sports

and studio and tidiness in cabins and Naturalists' Club and swimming and diving and riding and paddling . . . everything we do, that is, everything to our credit, is added up at the end of each week, and a score-card kept by the chief of each tribe. Oh, and each tribe undertakes some special piece of work that they do together. I hope ours will be building the log cabin. The men have put up the frame and the logs and we, or some other tribe, will do the rest. The Ojibways won the cup last year and of course we mean to keep it.'

'Oh, we'll do our very best, won't we, Jan?' said Jill fervently. 'Would it help if we' . . . she looked around desperately seeking for a possible improvement . . . 'if we waxed the floor?' she finished triumphantly, having in her mind's eye the shining floors of her own home.

Gay smiled at Jill. Nearly every one did smile at Jill. 'Oh, no, we needn't go that far,' she said. 'But we must get every bit of fluff from under the beds. Bee has sharp eyes. Now let's carry our suitcases up to the big cupboard at the Hall where they'll stay for the summer and our city hats and coats and dresses too . . . we've each got a locker there.'

A few minutes later the quartette eating Gee's journey chocolates were on their way to the tennis

courts, Jill skipping ahead as she always did when she was happy.

'Am I happy? Am I happy?' she was chanting as they passed the basket-ball field. Di Harris, a big ball tucked under her arm, was making up her teams from a group of girls surrounding her. She waved to the Wigwoos and then with long, springy strides met them at the turn of the path.

'Anybody here who'll save my life?' she asked. 'I want a try-out game, and basket-ball doesn't seem any too popular this year.'

'I'll play, Di,' said Gee promptly.

'And I, if I'll be any help,' added Jan.

'Two of us do, Di?' asked Gay quickly before Jill could make up her mind to follow suit. 'We're due at the tennis courts right now.'

'Two will be splendid, thanks,' smiled Di. 'I think Lorry and Betsy are coming.'

'Lor and Bet, you mean, don't you? You've forgotten about the monosyllables, Di,' said Gee as they moved away. 'It doesn't matter to you, but if you knew my relief after having answered to "Gertie" last summer!'

'No more basket-ball for me,' said Gay as she and Jill went on toward the courts. 'And once let Di get you in her clutches! I want to improve my tennis. Isn't it a lovely morning for playing!'

Jill agreed, howbeit a little absently. She wished as the balls began to fly, that she had offered to help out with the basket-ball; but she'd been slow because she really wanted to play tennis; Jan hadn't waited. . . . What a nice frank smile Di had and how strong she looked . . . as if she could do anything and love doing it. . . . Did Gay mean to let Di think they were due to meet some one else at the courts? . . . Of course not, Gay wouldn't do such a thing.

'Hi there!' called Gay. 'Love game! Are you asleep or what?'

'"What," I guess.' Jill grinned and shook her hair out of her eyes.

How cool and trim Gay looked! How did she manage it? Now then.

The balls flew fast and Jill's nimble feet fairly twinkled as she covered the court.

'Forty — love. . . . Game. . . . Game all. Well played! Now you're awake once more. I see I'll have to brisk up a bit.'

They enjoyed their game thoroughly, for they were well-matched. Gay, who was delighted to find some one who could give her good practice, invited Jill to come out for a paddle that evening; hinted that the Ojibways were always on the look-out for good tennis players and that perhaps she could say a word in the right quarter.

Jill's cheeks and eyes glowed at the very thought. Oh, if Gay only would! To be an Ojibway, to wear the tribal colors, and give the secret sign, and sit at secret council with Gay! And to go out in Gay's canoe! Could there *be* greater bliss than that! *Oh*, how happy she was!

Running down toward the basket-ball field to see if Jan and Gee were still playing, Jill met Judy who was carrying a paste-board box full of bathing caps, and at the sight of those brightly colored bits of rubber Jill's heart sank down to her toes. Oh, dear, oh, dear! She'd forgotten all about those miserable tests. And Miss Moore had said that only those who had passed them could go in a canoe *ever*. Oh, bother, bother, bother!

'What's the matter, honey?' asked Judy, who had deposited her box on a convenient log. 'Help me sort these out like a love — or any way you like.'

Jill explained her trouble while they made four piles of the caps — blue, yellow, red, and white.

'Well,' said Judith reasonably, 'if you know how to swim in five feet of water, you know how to swim in six or seven feet; just make up your mind that you can, and you'll pass the first test with honors.'

'I couldn't, Judy, I just couldn't,' said Jill miserably. 'That first test is awfully hard: "Be

upset into deep water, keep on the surface for fifteen minutes, and swim out to the raft" — Oh, I couldn't possibly. I can't *bear* deep water. Couldn't I go and tell Miss Moore that I can swim and perhaps she'd make an exception to the rule about the boats?'

'No, Jilly,' said Judith, shaking her head, 'no, I wouldn't go to Big Chief and ask to be made an exception — it isn't done — not in the best society — at Conqueror — what sort of Camp would it be if everybody ——'

'Oh, I know what you want to say — ' Jill grinned in spite of her disappointment:

'What sort of camp
Would this camp be,
If every little camper
Were just like she!'

'That's the idea,' laughed Judy. 'Don't say you "just can't" go into deep water, Jilly. Of course you can't, if you make up your mind that way. Ever hear of the influence of mind over matter? Well, I'll demonstrate this afternoon at three-thirty sharp — before General Swimming — and meantime you keep saying to yourself, "I'm going to have a lovely swim with Judy this afternoon. Won't I look nice in a red cap!"'

'I love you, Judy,' said Jill soberly. 'You're

awfully nice. And I *will* try. I'll say it over and over and I'll be there sharp on time.'

Promptly at the hour agreed Jill slipped down to the beach without saying anything to the others: she wouldn't mind telling Jan if she failed but she'd hate to let Gay know . . . Jan was the most 'understanding' person.

The beach was deserted. Jill strolled up and down, squeezing her toes into the cool wet sand at the water's edge. A sand piper ran past and Jill watched him making his absurd little curtseys to the waves until a big stump hid him from view. Still no sign of Judy.

'I'm going to have a lovely swim with Judy,' whispered Jill brightly. 'Won't I look nice in a *red* cap!'

She sauntered down on the little dock, stretched herself out on the warm boards, and dabbled her hands in the blue water. How fascinating the shining drops were, and the little dancing waves! But she mustn't look down into the deep water, she mustn't, because then she'd begin to imagine things . . . She repeated her formula once more, this time less happily, and tried desperately to keep her mind away from thoughts of the dark depths which always frightened her so. Why didn't Judy come?

'I'm going to have a lovely swim,' whispered Jill gallantly; but her eyes, as if pulled by some unseen magnet, were searching the still, dark water below the sparkling blue wavelets. *What* was down there? Something that pulled you down, down, *down*. Down to where the water snakes lived. They would coil around her, she could feel them, cold and slimy! As always, at this point in her imagining, Jill felt as if she were going to be ill.

'You're Jill Grier, aren't you?' said a cheerful voice behind her.

Jill jumped to her feet with a cry of joy. But it wasn't Judy's voice.

'Judy asked me to tell you she was sorry she couldn't come,' said Babs briskly. 'Big Chief asked her to look after something or other — you wanted to take your first test, didn't you? I'm sub for Miss Dunstan, so hop in — do you know the strokes?'

'Yes — yes — I think so,' stammered Jill, her teeth chattering with cold and nervousness. She wished with all her heart that she could wait until Judy could take her, but a dozen or more campers, including Gay and Gee, had followed Babs to the dock, quite ready to put in time until the horn blew by watching Babs put a recruit through her paces. If Jill lacked courage to strike out

into deep water, she also lacked courage to refuse to try.

Still within her depth and giving herself a cautious start by pushing off on one foot, Jill obediently demonstrated her ability to swim breast, crawl, and back.

'O.K,' pronounced Babs laconically. 'Now float.'

'I can't,' said Jill with dismal finality in her tone.

'Of course you can,' answered Babs cheerfully. 'Here, I'll come in with you — now, over on your back — that's the way — a stroke or two — now, I'll push you out into deep water and you'll float easily.'

'No!' shrieked Jill, such terror in her voice that every idler on wharf and beach came to attention.

Babs pulled Jill back quickly into her depth, and, startled and shocked at the extreme pallor of her face and the blueness of her lips, said quickly, 'Look here, are you all right? Not faint or anything? Heart wobbly?'

'No,' gasped Jill as she pulled herself up on the little dock.

But Babs was genuinely upset.

'You'd better see Dr. Symons,' she said. 'Perhaps you oughtn't to be in the water at all.'

'Oh, no, I'm all right,' said Jill a little absently.

In a flash she had seen a way out of her predicament. She could hear old Dr. Brown's voice as he snapped up his stethoscope only a few days ago. 'She's sound as a bell, Mrs. Grier, the holiday has done wonders for her. Have a good time this summer, young woman, sleep ten hours every night and eat all you can, but be careful about going into the water — once a day is plenty — plenty — you youngsters always overdo a good thing.'

Mechanically Jill thanked Babs who was wrapping her ulster around her. Yes, oh, yes, she'd see Dr. Symons and tell her that her doctor said she was to be careful about going into the water. . . . And no one would expect her to do it. . . . The dread would be gone. . . . Gay wouldn't expect her to earn a red cap. . . . She'd be given some other hard thing to do in order to be made an Ojibway. . . . She'd explain to Judy. . . . And to Big Chief . . . They'd be very sympathetic. . . . Her thoughts racing ahead with lightning speed stopped with a jerk before Big Chief. . . . Big Chief would be kind and sympathetic, and her eyes would be candid and *trusting!* . . . Oh, she couldn't . . . of course, she just couldn't hide behind an excuse and look into Big Chief's eyes. Jill's heart sank as Babs called after her.

'Hurry, like a good youngster, get a hot drink at Tuck and see Docky. Your lips are as blue as blue.'

'They're blue because I'm in a blue funk,' Jill gave a feeble imitation of a laugh. 'I'm scared, that's all — all right — I'll go and get a drink.'

A hot cup of cocoa and a brisk toweling made such a difference in both feelings and appearance, that Jill was reluctant to bother Dr. Symons, and very glad when there was no response to her knock and she could slip away without answering a lot of questions. Away to the meadow behind the tennis courts she ran, eager to be alone and face by herself a horrid question which was insisting on being answered.

'Am I really a coward?' Jill put it squarely and shrank before the reply she had to face. 'I guess I am,' she answered for herself. 'I'm scared, just plain scared, so I wanted to hide behind an excuse. Oh, dear, I'm *so* ashamed. Why can't you behave decently like other people, Jill Grier? What would Jan think of you? And Judy? And Gay?'

Gay? Gay would certainly not wish to have a coward in the tribe of the Ojibways.

It was too much. The tears which she had fought until now came with a rush and Jill flung herself down among the daisies.

By and by she heard a sound, a lovely, exquisite sound, which stopped her tears and drew her to her feet. Again came the beautiful bell-like note, but this time fainter and farther away.

'I believe it was!' declared Jill aloud.

'So do I,' said a voice behind her, and Big Chief laid a finger on her lips as a fairy-like peal of bells tinkled down from a high tree-top across the meadow.

'He probably won't sing again until dusk,' continued Miss Moore when they had waited another minute. 'At first I thought he was a hermit thrush, didn't you? Some of their notes are very much alike but that last cascade of bells is the true veery song. . . . I want two big bunches of these daisies, both the marguerites and the black-eyed Susans, to put in the Lodge; have you time to help me?'

'I'd love to,' said Jill, brushing away the last tears that hung on her lashes. 'They're lovely, aren't they? I never saw so many daisies in my life before.'

'Have you ever suddenly come upon a clump of pink Lady's Slipper?' asked Big Chief.

'No,' answered Jill. 'I wish I had. I've only seen a single specimen that Dad found one spring. They must be perfectly beautiful in the green woods.'

'They are,' said Big Chief. 'It's too bad they are over now.'

They gathered more daisies, and then Miss Moore said gently, 'Would you like to tell me what is troubling you? Perhaps I could help. We want everybody to be happy at Camp Conqueror, you know.'

Jill's lip trembled.

'Not yet. I'd rather not talk about it,' she said breathlessly. 'I was just wondering about the name of the camp, when I heard the veery. Is it an Indian name translated? I could tell Dad and Mum when I write.'

It was a desperate effort to keep the conversation going, but on safe topics which would enable her to get the better of her lips and eyes, and Miss Moore accepted her decision.

'It's probably Indian in origin,' she said, binding her sheaf of daisies with a bit of vine. 'The lake has a French name — Lac du Conquérant — and I just adopted it for Camp.' She looked keenly at Jill intent on tying up her flowers, her cheeks flushed with emotion, her long lashes still wet with tears.

'I like the name — Conqueror — don't you?' Miss Moore continued slowly. 'It has a nice secret meaning for those of us who love it here —

especially perhaps when we've left camp and look back and think of the battles we fought and won here — Conqueror — yes, I like it.'

'So do I,' cried Jill impetuously. 'It's a nice word — like "steady" — and — "loyal" — but, we don't always win — it's — it's awfully hard — sometimes . . . isn't it, Miss Moore?'

'Yes, it is hard,' assented Miss Moore gravely. 'That's what I was thinking about before the veery sang. We all have something to conquer, haven't we?'

Jill nodded vehemently.

'But it's worth while fighting, splendidly worth while,' added Miss Moore gently.

She tied the vine a little more firmly and gave the sheaf to Jill.

'Do you think one small camper could carry all these daisies and put them in the big jars in the Lodge? Thank you. And remember, if you want to come sometime and tell me ——'

Jill murmured a husky 'thank you,' and departed on her errand.

A little later Judith found her near the Lodge looking out over the lake, lost apparently in some pleasant day-dream.

'Penny for your thoughts, Jilly? Or am I addressing an enchanted princess buried beneath a

pyramid of flowers — give me one bundle — sorry I couldn't come. How did you get along?'

'I didn't get along at all, Judy,' said Jill ruefully. 'I — I was a quitter — I'm awfully sorry — but — I'm not going to be scared again — you don't happen to think of a word that rhymes with conqueror, do you?'

'Bless the child — what next? — no, I can't say I do.' Judith's eyes twinkled. 'By the way' a little bird whispered in Di's ear that a camper in the Wigwoo had composed the new verses for "I wish I was a fish." Di looked very much impressed, took out a notebook marked *Ojibway*, and wrote something in it. But I'm sure I don't know what it could be.'

'Oh, Judy!' Jill's flowers went flying. 'Wouldn't it be simply *wonderful!*'

'Oh, Jilly, wonderful what?'

'Don't pretend, Judy. I'd just die with happiness! What a funny upsy-downsy day this has been!'

Judy smiled. 'You're a lamb, Jilly. There's the supper horn. I must fly.'

'Don't forget a rhyme for conqueror, please,' Jill called after her. 'Conqueror — conqueror — yes, I *like* it.'

CHAPTER III

THE CENTER OF THE PICTURE

NOBODY in the Wigwoo wanted to go to sleep. Least of all the mosquitoes. The day had been hot and evening had not brought its customary cool breeze. Even the fortunate campers who had gone out in canoes had come home declaring that they were hotter than ever. Big Chief had delayed the Lights-Out bugle a full half-hour, but still the heat persisted — and the mosquitoes.

From adjoining cabins came sounds of smart slaps and wails as the afflicted ones counted their 'bites,' and demanded lotions and comfortings.

Jill, judging by her complaints, was getting more attention from the pests than was, strictly speaking, her share.

'That's fourteen,' she moaned, hitting her forehead and then her ear. 'No, fifteen. The beasts! How did they all get in? There won't be anything left of me by morning if they keep on eating me!'

'Oh, there'll be enough to identify,' said Gay solemnly. 'We'll give you a highly decorative funeral.'

'Let's go to sleep,' murmured Jan, who was tired

from a long day spent mostly on or in the water.

'That's what I say,' agreed Gee, 'we've talked about 'em enough. I'll put the skeeter lotion right beside you, Jill, and the oil is on the window sill.'

'That's just like you — both of you,' groaned Jill, 'being sensible right in the middle of the night. Oh! Here's another one. If I could just get the brute! Where did I put my flashlight?'

'Look under your pillow,' suggested Gee, 'at the top against the frame.'

'Good head you've got, Gee dear,' began Jill, flashing her light about in a half-hearted attempt to locate the mosquito. 'Ah, got him!

"Look under your pill-y
Like a good little Jill-y,"
says she.
"It may sound quite sill-y
But I know they will kill-me,'"
says I.

Not a perfect rhyme but it'll do for now. Oh, Jan, you do look funny. Your mouth's open!"

'So is yours,' said Jan unexpectedly. 'You talk too much, Jilly. Go to sleep.'

'Or keep quiet, anyway,' added Gay severely.

'No fair, three against one!' murmured Jill, crushed by these remarks but anxious, nevertheless, to have the last word.

The mosquitoes still droned their maddening song, but now, fortunately, outside the netting. It was really Jill's carelessness in leaving the door open, while she shouted prolonged good-nights to Sheila and Ann in the Music Box, that had allowed so many of the little plagues to get into the Wigwoo. Jill anointed herself profusely once more, turned over her pillow, rumpled her hair, and fidgeted about. Even the sheets felt hot.

'Oh, how hot I am,' groaned Jill but, mindful of the recently administered snubs, quite inaudibly. 'I believe I'm getting feverish — probably one of these bites has poisoned me. I read some place that mosquitoes caused fever. . . . Oh, dear! Wouldn't it be horrid to be sick; they'd all be terribly sorry they were so cross with me.' In spite of her woes Jill grinned in the darkness at Jan's quick retort. Good old Jan! She'd hardly seen her all day. How Jan did love the water . . . swimming, diving, paddling, rowing. She'd been given a yellow cap right away because she had passed the Royal Life Saving exams, and of course she'd have a Blue before the summer was over because Big Chief would soon see how quick and wise and dependable she was. Jill felt a thrill of pride. Good old Jan!

Outside, the mosquitoes continued to buzz.

'Seems as if they're the voices of the heat,' thought Jill drowsily. 'Pricky voices — like being hot.

Every little prickle
Has a little voice,
Every little skitter
Makes his horrid noise.

No, it won't do. Oh, dear! I'm the only one awake in the whole camp, I guess. I'll probably lie awake till morning!'

But of course she didn't. She'd been sound sleep for several hours when she was wakened by something hitting her cheek.

'Cross my heart, Jan, I wasn't talking,' she murmured drowsily.

'Talking! Of course you are.' This from Gay scornfully. 'I wish you'd stop throwing things around!'

'Cut it out, Jilly — you can tell us all about it in the morning.' Jan was cross this time.

'Cut *what* out?' said Jill indignantly. 'I haven't said a thing' ——

Bang!

A small vase of wild flowers which had been standing on a shelf at the head of Gee's bed had smashed itself to pieces on the floor.

'Who did that?'

'Stop your silliness, Jill.'

'It *wasn't* me.'

'It's the cook's cat,' said Gee. 'I told you you'd let him in, Jill.'

Swish, swoop, swish.

Four heads ducked under the bedclothes with surprising unanimity.

'If that's a cat
I'll eat my hat,'

chuckled Jill irrepressibly.

Swish, swoop!

A bat!

'If they get in your hair,' began Jill faintly.

'We'd better open the door,' said Gay. 'Gee, you're the nearest.'

Gee made a swift sortie and the door stood invitingly open.

But the bat continued his flight.

Jan uncovered an ear.

'We can't leave the door open,' she announced, 'the skeeters are rushing in in droves. What could we hit him with? I know, the broom. Where is it?'

'I left it in the Music Box this morning,' said Jill penitently. 'Oh, Jan, don't go.'

But Jan was already out of bed, and soon was capably hustling a poor innocent, frightened little bat out into the quiet darkness he longed for.

'Jan, are you sleepy?' Jill's voice was gentle and most ingratiating.

'I shall be in a minute if you'll be quiet.'

'I've thought of a verse — every line rhymes perfectly, it won't take a second and it may be lost by morning.

'We thought it a cat
And loudly called "scat,"
But much worse than that
It was really a bat.

I'll add another stanza in the morning about your bravery, or I could do it now.'

'No!' cried everybody together. 'Go to sleep!'

'Give her a chocolate bar, Gee. Brain work is exhausting,' said Gay. 'And I'll throw my pillow at you, Jilly, if you dare ask me if anything scans or rhymes!'

'So will I,' said Jan firmly. 'Close your eyes and your mouth, Jilly, *do*.'

Jill obediently did as she was told and silence once more descended upon the Wigwoo.

Jill's last thought was that she would have plenty of time next morning to finish her rhymes, but next morning brought all sorts of pleasant doings and Jan's bravery for the time being was not immortalized in verse.

Jill felt rather breathless these days trying to

enjoy several things at once. Just to be alive and out in the clear, fresh, sparkling air was a joy, and when one could add the song of a vireo, and the scent of a briar rose, and a game of badminton, and a letter from home with a promise of a box of 'eats,' and tennis with Gay in the afternoon and a camp-fire that evening . . . Oh! it was hard keeping up with so many joys.

Of all the games they were playing at Camp she loved tennis best and she was keen to improve her game. It was the nicest sort of luck that Gay was of the same mind, and if only Jill could manage to keep up with her, and perhaps even — bold thought! — outdistance her a little, ever so little, they could play often together. Every day perhaps.

She was getting ready now for a game with Gay, tying a ribbon band about her brown curls, her bright eyes shining in anticipation of a good time.

'Are I happy? Are I happy?' she hummed.

Wasn't it sweet of Gay to play with her when she might have anybody? Even one of the seniors. Anybody would like to play with Gay. And weren't she and Jan lucky to have Gay to show them all around and introduce them to everybody, and get them started in the Naturalists' Club and the folk-dancing and badminton . . . instead of basket-ball which they might have chosen if left

to themselves. And being at Gay's table was such fun; she was just as gay as her name — Jan thought her wonderful too. Gay had swum right across the lake, last year, when she was only fifteen! Oh, dear! It was more than half-past two now, and she was to be at the courts at two-thirty sharp.

Away rushed Jill up the hill. What a duck of a day! How blue and golden and altogether lovely! She wanted to toss the racquets and balls away up over the tree-tops and go sailing after them . . . light as a feather . . . and play with clouds instead of balls . . . What fun!

The three other players were already at the court.

'Whatever have you been doing, Jilly?' was Gay's greeting in vexed tones. 'We've been waiting ten minutes for you. And you don't mean to tell me you've forgotten my racquet after all!'

'I'm frightfully sorry,' began Jill penitently, preparing to turn and rush back again to the Wigwoo.

'Never mind, Jilly. Here, Gay, take mine.' Di, who was going to umpire the game, good-naturedly handed over her own pet racquet.

They tossed for courts, and as Betsy and Loraine crossed to the north side, Jill began to toss two

balls upward toward those fascinating little white clouds. No doubt at all, it was a darling day. Too bad she'd forgotten Gay's racquet.

'Di's umpiring,' said Gay in significant low tones, 'so we must win, Jilly. I want her to see how well you can play. Watch Lor; she's tricky at the nets. Too bad they're both so much taller than you; they've got a long stretch between 'em.'

If there were a hidden meaning it was lost on Jill. It was nice of course to have Di as umpire because Di was a dear, but so were Lor and Bet and Gay . . . even when she was a little bit cross.

Jill had kept her balls flying while Betsy had been knotting a broken shoe-lace and now at Gay's impatient ' Come on, Jilly,' she caught them skillfully one in each hand and bowed low to Loraine's ' *Voilà*, Jilly, the Juggler!' Oh, it was good to be alive on such a lovely day! She felt absurdly happy as she raised her racquet to play.

The balls began to fly steadily and swiftly. Each of the players won her first service: it was evident that they were well matched. Loraine and Betsy might have a long reach, but Gay played well, though not brilliantly, and Jill was exceedingly quick and nimble.

So far, so good. Jill had been getting the measure of her opponents, now she'd try that spinning

return; an 'easy' ball first, and then! But Lorry didn't give her time to try it; she sent back the 'easy' ball with a tremendous drive that made both Jill and Gay laugh spontaneously, so sudden and untouchable was it.

The second point was lost in a double fault, the third after hard playing, and the fourth, because Gay in her anxiety to make a count took a ball that was Jill's by rights, and missed it.

'The games are three, two,' chanted Di.

Jill grinned cheerfully as she retrieved the ball, but Gay said a little crossly, 'Watch out now, Jill, or we'll lose this set if you're not careful.'

'If I'm not careful! How about that last ball?' Jill almost said aloud. 'Sorry,' she said absently. A horrid thought had crept into her mind. Was Gay a bad loser? Of course not! Everybody liked to win. She did herself . . . loved it. Betsy was winning her serve now.

'Forty, love,' sang Di.

Jill came to attention. She crouched like a lithe little cat as she waited for the next ball. Bet wasn't going to get the game as easily as *that*.

'Well played!' cried a spectator as the ball sped hither and thither, and, 'Too bad,' cried some one else, as Gay repeated her trick of poaching on Jill's side of the court and losing the point.

'Well, we can't always win,' observed Jill lightly as they changed courts for the second set. 'You got that one pretty easily but watch out, Betsy Baldwin! I've ever so many magics in the handle of this racquet that I haven't used yet. Look to yourselves!'

'You might have begun sooner if you can play better,' said Gay in a low voice which this time was distinctly cross and snappish. Jill looked startled. Then an impish light shone in her eyes as Gay raised her racquet. *Very* well, Miss Gay! Now for some fun! She had to let Gay serve, but after that Gay might just as well have not been on the court. Jill filched every ball from under her partner's very nose: she was here, there, and everywhere all at once: she looked like a naughty elf playing pranks, but that there was method in her madness was quite apparent as Di called the score. Loud applause greeted the announcement, 'Love Game.'

Jill had won all of Gay's points for her!

'Bad Girl,' called one of the spectators whose numbers had been swelled by the addition of the Sketch Club on their way home.

'She jumped nearly as high as the net,' said somebody else. 'She's a winner all right!'

'Spank her, Gay,' cried another.

Gay's smile was somewhat forced: she didn't say anything, nor did she even look at Jill.

Jill felt intoxicated with her success and the approval of the gallery. She danced about on twinkling, white-shod feet, made several passes with her racquet and said solemnly, 'I warn you to be careful, Loraine Reynolds. . . . I'm making a Big Magic . . . a Love Potion for you . . . and if you try any Little Magic on me you'll be — *loved!*'

'A love set, eh, Miss Impertinence? We'll see about that. On guard!'

Then Lorry's balls came, swift and well placed. Jill was on her mettle now, and she had found out Lorry's weak spot: a temptation to leave her line and do valiant work at the net. Back and back again flew the white balls. Every point was well-fought: a deuce game, vantage, first in, then out. Deuce twice, deuce three times. This was not tennis according to Hoyle for Gay and Betsy were practically ignored. Finally, with a neat, quick little twist Jill dropped the ball dead on the right side of the net and the game was hers. So was the set. The applause was hearty and spontaneous. 'A good set!' 'Well played!' The last would be worth watching! Stragglers crossing the field were called in to see something worth while.

Jill frisked about gathering up the balls: it had

been fun, but she'd almost rather frolic for a while than go on with the game; run races or sing a silly song or do something ridiculous. She felt utterly happy and much elated. At the net as they changed courts she met Lorry. Jill struck an attitude, and quoted:

'O Bottom, thou art chang'd!
What do I see on thee?'

. . . ('An ass's head, wasn't it? That's because you wouldn't heed my warning.') . . .

'Out of this wood do not desire to go;
Thou shalt remain here whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of no common rate:
The summer still doth tend upon my state'

(Jill waved her racquet as wand at the trees.)

'And I do love thee: therefore, go with me:
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee.'

'Huh! No fairies for me,' said Lorry in her deep voice. 'But Magic for Magic, Queen Titania. Methinks King Oberon, too, made trouble with Magic. Look to yourself!'

The spectators around the umpire's chair regarded Jill respectfully. Imagine being able to quote Shakespeare! Jan, who had joined the group, was heard saying proudly to Di, 'Yes, Jilly played the Queen in Midsummer Night's Dream: it was great!'

Gay saw Di's nod of approval. There would be no doubt now that Jill would be called to the tribe of the Ojibways: good tennis players were just as popular with chieftains as good swimmers, and braves who could be relied upon to take a part in tribal dramatics and do valiant service with the tribal pen were much sought after. Jill could probably have her pick of the tribes when the story of the game was known. The very idea! Gay's lips tightened. Jill! That little slip of a thing . . . to turn the tables in this fashion! . . . And everybody applauding her! Gay wasn't accustomed to playing second fiddle and she didn't like it at all. Decidedly Jill needed putting in her place.

'Watch me, Gay,' said Jill, making passes with her racquet at Lorry. 'I'm making another Magic.'

'Everybody's watching you, if that's what you want,' said Gay in a low voice, irritation getting the better of her. 'For pity's sake, cut out this tomfoolery and let's get down to tennis.'

Jill's bubble of gayety burst with a bang: for a second it was on the tip of her tongue to say, 'Well, we won that set, or at least I did.' But she had the grace to keep quiet, for in the next second she saw very plainly that Gay was quite right:

she *had* been wanting to attract attention and be applauded, and even if Gay had deserved tit for tat in the matter of keeping to her own court she needn't have gone so far: it had been dull for Gay.

'Sorry, Gay, cross my heart, I am. I'll behave.'

Jill's low voice was wholly penitent, but Gay hardened her heart and pretended she did not hear her.

The last set was well contested but not nearly so interesting from the spectators' point of view, and Gay was angrier than ever as she realized that the group around Di were probably quite clever enough to suspect that she had put a damper on Jill's over-activity; Jill was being almost over-punctilious in her desire to let Gay have a chance to redeem herself.

Gay did her utmost, but so did Lorry and Betsy. They had no desire to be beaten. Jill's magic had vanished and the set was lost.

Just as Di made her final announcement a great commotion was heard under the trees behind the court: the barking of Dan's dog and cries of 'Get him, Nicky!' 'Call him off, Bet!'

Everybody rushed over to see the porcupine Nicky had been rash enough to engage in combat, and Gay and Jill on the other side of the net

'I DID PLAY THE FOOL, GAY'

were alone in a moment. Jill's remorse had been growing with every look she had stolen at her angry partner. How lovely she was, like an angry princess or a queen . . . not ugly like ordinary people when they were cross, just more dignified, her cheeks a little deeper rose, and eyes a little more darkly blue. Jill's heart sank. This wonderful person had condescended to be friends with her and she'd behaved like an idiot!

'I did play the fool, Gay,' she said impulsively. 'Better luck next time.'

'Next time?' murmured Gay, raising her beautiful arched eyebrows.

Jill was crushed completely this time and fled without another word.

She had just reached the shelter of the Wigwoo when Judith appeared in the doorway.

'Seen Gee anywhere?' she asked. 'I'll wait here a moment or two if you don't mind: she said she'd be ready by a quarter to four and she's usually on time. What's the matter, Jillikins? You look terribly woebegone!'

There was quick sympathy in her voice and Jill poured out her tale. She pictured the little scene so dramatically that Judith laughed outright in spite of herself at Gay's neat retort.

'Sorry, Jilly,' she said instantly, for there was

no doubt that Jill was extremely unhappy about it. 'I could just hear Gay! Well — you do seem to have played the fool a bit — we all do sometimes, but most of us don't realize it; and as you have, you'll be more likely to behave next time. As for Gay, I wouldn't take her too seriously. She rather enjoyed snubbing you, you know, and she probably was so pleased with her "Next time?" that she's forgiven you by now. Gay's not a bad sort at all, but — she does love to be the center of the picture. Have you seen the chipmunk Gee is modeling in the studio?'

'Gee?' asked Jill in surprise. 'No, I didn't know she *could*.'

'She can. I give you my word. Very clever fingers. Get her to tell you about the trip she took with her father through Quebec hunting for bits of old wood-carving — figures of saints and so forth in the village churches. She and Ann were doing some lovely caricatures yesterday up at the Ark. Come and see them to-night. They're a nice little bunch in the Ark, you'll like Shem and Ham. Lots of nice people about. There come Gee and Jan. I'll be off duty at the diving tower Monday, so at four sharp you and I will swim together, if you have made up your mind to get rid of that white cap.'

'Thanks, Judy,' said Jill fervently. 'You're a trump, no mistake.'

A few minutes later she put on her bathing suit, pulled the hated white cap over her curls, and went down to the beach with Jan.

The sun shone dazzlingly hot on the beach so they made for a little cave under the bank past the dock and found that three or four would-be bathers were there already. It was a snug little shelter from the sun; the bank, eaten away at its base by winter storms, was held together above by the roots of what had once been a great tree.

Jill stretched herself out on the sand beside Jan. Just to be with Jan was a comfort. . . . She was one of the *surest* people. . . . It was a hard world, but there were some nice things left in it. Jan was one of them, and Judy another. Imagine Gee being so clever, and Ann too! Judy was right, there were lots of nice people for one to know.

'Poor Nicky,' said the camper next to Jan, turning on her elbow, 'we pulled seven quills out of his nose. I could have cried, he looked so patient and miserable.'

Gay! of all persons! Right beside them.

'Must be nearly time for the horn to blow,' observed Gay, stretching out flat on her back and looking up at the dangling rootlets of the big stump

above her head. 'It was nearly four when — Oh! oh!'

There was such terror in the last two words that Jill could scarcely bear to turn her head to see the cause.

Gay's face was ashen white, her mouth still open from that last low, tense, 'oh!' her eyes fixed and staring at the roots above her.

Jill looked up. Was the earthen roof going to fall? Yes, the roots were swaying. Roots? A quick breath from Jan showed that she had seen at the same moment. The swaying root that held Gay's fascinated eyes like a powerful magnet was no root at all, but a snake! . . . A snake who seemed to be about to drop to the still white surface below. Or, was it still? Apparently he couldn't make up his mind.

He swayed again, lifted his head as if to swing himself up to his support, couldn't or wouldn't, caught the flicker of a movement below where he must drop, and shot out a tiny red tongue with lightning rapidity and hissed. A valorous little snake!

Sick with horror Gay closed her eyes. It was the only movement which she *could* make. He was slipping! In another moment he would touch her face, and she would die.

But at that precise moment a capable brown hand closed like a vise behind the fierce little snake head, jerked the tail free of the root, swung the striped body quickly, and tossed it far off on the sand.

'Oh, Jan! Jan! You've saved my life!' Gay was almost hysterical in her gratitude and relief.

'Only a garter snake,' said Jan in matter-of-fact tones. 'He wouldn't have bitten you.'

'But he'd have *touched* me,' cried Gay shuddering. 'Jan, I don't see how you could do it. Do you, Jill? Oh, wasn't it horrible? I *loathe* them.'

'They're not exactly pets of mine, but an old rancher taught me once how to grip them. He said it would come in handy — and it has,' quoth Jan, going down to the water to wash her hands. 'Come on, Jilly, and I'll show you how to bring in a drowned person.'

Jill followed her to the water. She was almost as white as Gay.

'I don't know how you did it, Jan,' she said in a low, tense voice. 'Just suppose the snake had coiled up your arm.' She shuddered.

Jan grinned. 'But I didn't *suppose* or perhaps I wouldn't have had the nerve to catch hold quickly. If something's got to be done it doesn't do to go supposing and thinking about it too much — just

do it — that's all. Come on, we'll stay right inside the five-foot line, so you needn't think about that. Now, I'm drowned, and you want to take me over to the dock; it'll be harder 'cos the water is so shallow but I guess we can manage if you'll keep your mind on it and not go *supposing* a dragon is going to bite your little toe.'

Jill managed an answering smile and forgot all about the snake in Jan's quick explanations and orders that followed.

In her desire to talk over all the details of the snake episode as the Wigwoos dressed for supper Gay seemed to have forgotten entirely her ill-humor of a few hours ago. Jill was glad of that, but something else was claiming her attention now: Jan's words, 'It doesn't do to go supposing and thinking too much. Just *do* it.'

She remembered them again as she sat around the camp-fire that evening: one half of her mind was listening to the songs and reveling in the beauty of the scene, for it was a fire worth watching: built skillfully of dry driftwood, it blazed and glowed and cast lovely, flickering lights and shadows which the still mirror of the lake faithfully reflected: westward the water was stained with the deep rose and purple of the sunset. Jill, the beauty-lover, wanted to surrender herself wholly to the im-

mediate joy of the scene, but something within wouldn't let her; 'It doesn't do to go supposing and thinking.' . . . 'And I do,' said an honest little voice within, . . . 'But I've got to think,' . . . 'Yes, but not that way. . . . Straight ahead . . . not shooting off in every direction, not imagining this and that . . . and thinking about yourself and what's going to happen to *you*.' . . . 'Why-ee, I *am* nearly always thinking about *myself* when I'm frightened.'

Jill stopped listening to the music and gave her full attention to this unpleasant discovery. Her cheeks grew pink as she remembered what she had said to Jan: 'But supposing the snake coiled up *your* arm!' Jan wouldn't have said that; she was thinking about *Gay*.

Jill sighed. Oh, how *good* Jan was! *Why* couldn't she be like her. It was lovely to have such a friend for one's very own, but she'd have to be careful. Perhaps Jan would see just how foolish and selfish and . . . and cowardly she was, and wouldn't care about her any longer!

In sudden alarm Jill leaned over on her elbow, and under cover of the singing of 'Camp Conqueror,' whispered quickly in Jan's ear. 'I've just turned over a new leaf, Jan, you'll see — I'll be as different as *anything!*'

Jan grinned affectionately. 'Be careful, Jilly, I shouldn't like *too* many changes, you know.'

Jill sighed again. But this time a long, comfortable, relaxing sigh which showed that the creases in mind and soul which had been bothering her all evening were smoothing out.

Oh! Friends, sure, certain friends, were *wonderful!*

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST COUNCIL FIRE

EVERY Camp Conqueror girl was certain that Initiation Night would be the most beautiful evening of the whole summer, unless, they were apt to add, the night of the last Council Ring might be still more lovely.

Clearly these were the two occasions that took first place in their affections, and they seemed to think that there was some kindly conspiracy of moon and sun, of sky and wind, to make a fitting background for their pleasure. Newcomers, a little anxious about that word 'Initiation,' were reassured, and promised again and again that they would 'love it,' but given no further information as to details of the ceremony. They did not possess treasured memories of other First Council Rings like the older campers, but their curiosity was undoubtedly piqued, and it would have been hard to say who in all the camp waited most eagerly for the coming of Saturday evening.

Saturday dawned fair and clear. The barometer was eagerly consulted at breakfast time and gave no indications of a change in the fine weather which had prevailed all week.

Morning sports and games were as usual, but by afternoon every new camper was aware that doings were afoot in which she had no share: messengers ran hither and thither bursting with importance, groups of campers disappeared into the woods to hold tribal meetings, consultations with Big Chief were many and prolonged. Finally, the new campers also decided to do something, and, borrowing pails from the cook they betook themselves to the berry patch to pick raspberries for to-morrow's ice-cream.

'No use being excited about to-night,' Jan said very sensibly. 'It isn't as if we could decide on a tribe ourselves.'

'And it's mostly luck,' observed Pop. 'Babs told me that after each tribe has met separately they come together and each one chooses some names, and if there's any difficulty, they draw lots.'

'There are only twenty of us, anyway, so we're probably all settled long ago,' said Pip cheerfully. 'All the tribes have nice campers in 'em so why worry?'

Jill found it much easier to agree to this sentiment than she would have done a few days before, yet she assuredly had not lost her keen desire to be an Ojibway. 'It isn't only because of Gay and Gee and Di,' she confided to Jan, 'but it's such a nice

name: Chickasaw sounds queer and I'd hate to be called a Blackfeet, or would it be Blackfoot? Jan, what *shall* I do if we're not in the same tribe? They *wouldn't*, would they?'

'They might,' said Jan calmly, throwing back her head and emptying a whole handful of luscious red berries into her mouth. 'But I hope they won't. Judy's the Ojibway counselor, you know, and I'm counting on her to show them the right thing to do.'

Jill was comforted, but, nevertheless, felt thrills of trepidation and excitement as the last preparations were made after supper. Gay showed the two newcomers how to drape their colored blankets, and hold them firmly for the journey down into the valley: and Gee brought them each two small fagots of dry pine which they must take with them, and then bound ribbon bands about their heads, adding to Gay's at the most proper Indian angle, the feather won last year for prowess in swimming.

At last came the longed-for bugle-call, and Gay and Gee departed to join their own tribe, having first of all conducted Jan and Jill to the twin pine tree before the Hall where all the new campers were to wait 'until called for.' The only direction they had been given was that they would be expected to be silent while the tribes assembled, during the

ceremony, and after it was over. They felt no temptation to chatter.

Almost, Jill thought, she could hear the beating of her heart, and the sweet evening song of a little yellow warbler seemed incredibly loud and strident.

Arm in arm with Jan and Pip she stood looking out over the lake to the west where in a sky of palest apple green the evening star hung like a great burning jewel. Below were bands of exquisite rose and palest primrose. The promise of the day was being fulfilled before their eyes: Camp Conqueror was to have a beautiful setting for her welcome to her newly arrived daughters.

Presently one of the counselors appeared and said in a hushed voice: 'Follow me in single file, please, to the "Visitors' Seat," and stay there to watch the ceremony until your names are called; then you may join your tribe in the Council Ring.'

'Your tribe!' Twenty hearts beat a trifle faster at the magic words.

Silently they crept in single file down a scarcely discernible trail, through the underbrush, on the steep side of the little valley. How shadowy and dark it was once they turned their backs on the sunset! Near the bottom of the slope their guide pointed to a long rustic bench and left them.

Not a sound could be heard but the cool trickle of the brook called 'Clear,' as it gurgled over its rocky bed. The whole camp seemed to have surrendered to some fairy enchantment. The new campers looked about them almost fearfully. They had all seen the little valley, by daylight, but to-night the glen looked strange and lonely, yet very lovely and mysterious in this twilight hour.

Neither Jan nor Jill for some reason or other had been near the valley since the first exciting day of Camp, when they had seen so many things, and they looked about them eagerly now.

To the south lay the lake they were coming to love so dearly, and on the other three sides were high, sloping banks, the northerly one broken by the entrance of the Clear.

Leafy shrubs and countless trees, mostly white birches, grew luxuriantly on the slopes of this natural amphitheater; the floor of the valley had been cleared of underbrush, although many of the slim young birch trees had been spared; an outcropping of flat rocks near the center formed an excellent spot for the great pyramidal camp-fire, and around it ran a huge circular seat of split logs capable of seating all the campers.

At first that was all Jill noticed, the big fire and

the seat, then as she looked more closely she saw on the western bank another log seat, on a high ledge of granite; in the center of it was a great rock so shaped that it might have been a chair or throne. That at least was how it appeared to Jill. 'That high rock would be a splendid place for the chief of a tribe to use when he was holding a big council of his warriors,' she thought. 'I wonder if Indians ever *did* use this valley as a camping place? — Probably they did . . . it's sheltered and has a nice little beach. . . . Perhaps the Clear was a big river then and they came sailing down it in their canoes and landed here and . . . Oh . . .! A thrill ran down Jill's spine — right down to her toes as she confessed afterward — Indian braves in single file were moving noiselessly across the valley and beginning to take their places about the council fire. Jill felt like rubbing her eyes. Were they there or was she dreaming it? They must have come down the bank and she hadn't heard a sound. Then came another file of warriors down their own particular trail on the east side and then another line, and another, until all four tribes had seated themselves in a great circle. Then the leafy branches were quietly parted on the western bank and the counselors and instructors took their places in the High Council Seat, and, last of all,

a tall figure mounted to the rocky, throne-like seat and Big Chief's bell-like voice broke the silence:

'Greetings, my braves!'

'Greetings, Big Chief!' came the hearty response.

'Let the fire-tenders come forth.'

Four braves detached themselves from the ring and knelt near the fire. The white stems of the birches gleamed palely in the twilight, the faces and figures of the braves were veiled in shadows.

Big Chief took her place beside the fire-tenders to perform the ceremony of the lighting of the first Council fire. She knelt before the piled logs and repeated John Oxenham's beautiful 'Sacrament of Fire':

> 'Kneel always when you light a fire!
> Kneel reverently and thankful be
> For God's unfailing charity,
> And on the ascending flame inspire
> A little prayer, that shall upbear
> The incense of your thankfulness
> For this sweet grace
> Of warmth and light!
> For here behold is sacrifice
> For your delight.'

Even practical Jan caught the stir of expectancy and the thrill of emotion that ran from heart to heart as Big Chief stooped, and kindled a fire.

The four fire-tenders fed the little blaze with dry pine twigs, and in an instant long tongues of purest flame were spurting upward, driving back the shadows and lighting up here and there a gayly striped blanket, a pale face with its shining eyes, a dark spruce, or a slender branch of birch with its delicate green leaves.

Back in her own place among the counselors Big Chief was speaking again.

'It has been our wont, O Braves, on this first Council night of the year to use the customs of the braves of long ago, to bury the hatchet and smoke the pipe of peace as a symbol that our lives together shall be both happy and peaceful. Is this your wish to-night?'

'How! How! O Chief!' came the ready assent.

'Then make ready. But first, there stand within our valley some stranger braves who desire to enter our tribes. Is it your wish that they be called now?'

'How! How! O Chief!'

'Then call the young braves.'

A chief stepped forward into the circle of flickering light, opened a scroll, and read:

'These, O Big Chief, are the braves of the tribe of the Chickasaws' (the names were read clearly), 'and we call to our tribe these stranger braves:

Sheila Blewitt, Elizabeth Bolton, Katharine Downing, Mary Sedgwick.'

Four of the muffled figures detached themselves from the group on the Visitors' Seat, walked across to their new fellow tribesmen and were greeted by a startling staccato cry which ended in a long mournful repetition of the name 'Chick-a-saw, Chick-a-saw!'

Then came the chief of the Crees with her list of warriors and ringing cry, and following her, Di Harris for the Ojibways.

Jill was so excited when Di began to read the names, her heart was beating so loudly in her ears, that she almost missed the beginning of that last important sentence: 'These are the young braves, O Big Chief, whom we call to the tribe of the Ojibways: Janet McNeil, Eunice Seaton, Abigail Seaton, Ann Jackson, Wilhelmina Grier.'

Just time to give Jan's arm a frantic squeeze and then with the cry of the Ojibways ringing in her ears, Jill followed Jan and took her place with *her own tribe.*

She didn't even hear the names of the Blackfeet, nor their battle cry. Poor things! They were nice, of course, and they couldn't help it that they weren't Ojibways.

Jill whispered the name to herself, 'Ojibway —

Ojibway — ' and nodded contentedly. It scanned nicely . . . and 'way' was an easy rhyme. . . . She'd make up a poem about this lovely ceremony tomorrow first thing after . . . no, *before*, breakfast.

'Let the chiefs come forward.'

Four figures stepped out in front of the High Council. Big Chief held high a silver hatchet, then presented it to the chiefs, and in silence they buried it before the Council Fire.

'So let all feuds, all jealousies, all hatreds disappear forever from the hearts and minds of all the braves of Camp Conqueror,' said Big Chief.

'How! How!' was the response of the braves.

Then Big Chief took from a runner a long pipe, whose bowl in the shape of an Indian Head held several short sticks of incense. She lit the incense, touched the stem to her lips, and passed it to the nearest counselor: slowly and in utter silence the symbol of peace was passed from one to another and one to another until it had made the round of the great circle and was brought back to the Chief. Holding it aloft she said:

'A symbol of the spirit of peace and happiness which is to dwell within us all at Camp Conqueror. Now that you have smoked with us this pipe of peace, you are one with us, and we welcome you, O Braves, to the tribes of the Chickasaws, the

Crees, the Ojibways and the Blackfeet. Yours now to bring to your tribe the loyalty and obedience which will keep bright its ancient traditions, and yours to share in its quests which will bring glory and renown to all. As a sign and symbol of our willingness and our intent to give our best to the common good, to live "not to ourselves but unto others" let each of us place a little fagot on the great fire that we may not forget our vows.

"'And on the ascending flame inspire
A little prayer.'"

Slowly and in a silence that vibrated with many an ardent 'little prayer,' first Big Chief, then the members of the High Council, and then the warriors one by one, stepped out of the circle and placed their fagots on the fire.

By this time twilight was fading into darkness. The fortunate braves who faced the lake could see the moon rising majestically in the deep, dark blue sky and making a silver pathway across the water. There was no doubt about it. Lady Moon was indeed in the secret, and this was to be the most beautiful of all the summer nights.

Jill thought that the placing of the fagots in the fire marked, perhaps, the close of the Initiation Ceremony, but the campers were settling them-

selves comfortably again and turned toward their Chief in happy expectancy.

'We spoke of tribal traditions, just now,' said Big Chief, 'of quests to be undertaken for the tribe. Of one such quest I should like to tell you. It is the story of how Wawana brought the Gift of Fire to his people.'

Big Chief paused for a moment or two until the fire-tenders had fed the flames so that the leaping light illumined the faces of her listeners; then in her low, clear voice she told them Mary Edgar's beautiful story, 'The Gift of Fire.'

It was a tale of heroism and sacrifice, a search for that Magic Gift which would bring light and warmth to the tribes who sat in darkness and in cold during the long winter months. Wawana, the young brave, who had resolved to win at any cost this great boon for his people, encountered the difficulties and hardships that always beset the path of high adventure, but he met danger with steadfast courage, and disappointment with fresh hopes and firm determination; his journeyings brought him to the Swamp Country where he found Light indeed, the flickering uncertain light of Wawatahsee, the Fire-Fly, but no heat, and to the Mountain Cave where he found Heat, the heat of a boiling mountain-spring but no light, and,

finally, to the kingdom of the Sun God, where he had been told he could surely obtain the Magic Gift of Fire, but only at the price of his own life.

'Arrived in the territory of the Sun God,' said Big Chief, 'Wawana did not hesitate. Taking the torch which the Spirit of the Woods had given him he dashed along a trail through the scorching, burning heat; the ground blistered his feet and the light blinded his eyes; he feared that he would perish before he obtained the precious gift. But, suddenly, as he ran, his torch burst into flame. It was a Magic Gift indeed, for within it glowed both Light and Heat. On he ran, holding aloft the flaming torch. He could not stay to rest his tired limbs or cool his burning wounds. On he ran until he reached the crest of a hill, and, to his great joy, saw below in the valley the tribe of his own people. With a warning cry Wawana summoned all his remaining strength and flung the torch far down into the valley where it was found by a runner and brought to the Chief.

'Wawana himself they saw no more. An instant he had been silhouetted against the sunset sky, then he was gone: but, dying, he left to his tribe two gifts which they prized above all other possessions and handed down to their children and their

children's children: the Magic Fire which gave them warmth and light, and the inspiring example of a deed of heroism and loyalty.'

Jill thrilled to the hidden meaning vibrating through the Indian tale. Her heart beat high in a passion of loyalty to Big Chief, to the tribe of the Ojibways, to Camp Conqueror. She, too, like Wawana, would dare and do great deeds! Oh, what wouldn't she do for her tribe! Be the swiftest of messengers, the keenest of scouts, the most painstaking of helpers, the bravest of fighters! She'd write poems about the doings of the Ojibways, the brave deeds of their noble past, and all the other tribes would envy the Ojibways their songs . . . but she'd not tell who wrote them! Oh, no, that would be her secret and the chief's, and if Di didn't want poems written, she'd do anything, *anything* at all, to show that she was a true and valiant Ojibway.

She came out of her dazzling day-dream just in time to hear Big Chief's concluding words: 'So, my children, up yonder in the Lodge let us build another fire, a fire of hospitality and friendship, each of us putting her own fagot with those of the others, and round it forming a great circle which cannot be broken. And because this friendship is such a precious possession let us first stand erect,

look up at the stars, and thank the Great Spirit for this gift He has given us.'

Two or three moments of pulsating silence, and then the circle resolved itself into a long line which wound its way up the trail and across the meadow-land to the Lodge, where each warrior deposited a fagot in the big fireplace.

Once more Big Chief knelt and said the beautiful words:

> 'Kneel always when you light a fire!
> Kneel reverently and thankful be
> For God's unfailing charity.'

And once more a flame was lit which was to burn in some heart forever.

CHAPTER V

'THE FOUR FEATHERS'

To Jan and Jill and the rest of the new campers the first week at Camp Conqueror had seemed happily busy and busily happy, but looking back after the increased activities of work and play which followed close upon Initiation Day, those first days appeared by way of contrast, a time of leisure. Chieftains and counselors, who had been waiting until the questions of initiation and elections were settled, were now able to organize their teams effectively, and see that each member of the tribe had some share in tribal life.

Gay's hope that to the Ojibways might fall the pleasant task of building the log cabin was realized, and the first meeting of the tribe had already been held at Look-Out Point to see what the carpenters had accomplished, and to plan for the completion of the cabin. That first meeting had been thrilling for the new braves — Jan, Jill, Ann, Pop, and Pip — jolly, too, and altogether satisfactory. Jill and Pop were elected as aids to the scroll-keeper, Madge Firth, Jan was made a scout, and Pip and Ann runners.

The cabin had been the center of interest; as Gay had said, the framework was finished and the logs in place; but there was still much to be done: several window-frames and a door leaned against one wall, and a small keg of nails, a chest of tools, and plenty of clean, smooth lumber were stacked in one corner ready for the new workmen.

According to Di's count, about seventy-three plans were drawn that first afternoon, and more had kept coming in ever since. Casual visitors from other tribes might express their surprise at all this mental activity, since so much of the cabin was completed, but the Ojibway knew better, and was ready to overwhelm the luckless outsider for her unthinking criticisms:

'What about the bunks?' she would ask. 'Shall we put all four in the north wall, or two there, and two on the east? If the latter, then how can we fit in a table near the stove (and everybody knows that a cook needs a table near by) and if the former, then what about the fourth window? And the cupboard for supplies? And are we to have shingles, or rolls of roofing? And what color are we to stain the woodwork?'

Some of these knotty problems were still unsolved, but several matters of importance had been settled almost at once, and carpentry parties were

already going down each morning for a couple of hours' work.

Oh! It was splendid, being an Ojibway! Think of having Judy (the best of 'em all!) as special Counselor, and Di as chief, and the log cabin as a tribal enterprise!

Jill became the most ardent of carpenters: and she was perfectly happy while she worked, for was not each nail well hammered in so much to the honor of the Ojibways?

On the basket-ball field she was one of Di's most useful aids: she was always ready to make up a set of tennis; she even attempted, though with inconspicuous success, to do her part in making the Wigwoo the neatest and sweetest of cabins: and she tried faithfully every day to conquer her fear of deep water so as to pass the first test and rid the Ojibways of the shame of owning a white cap.

One afternoon toward the end of the third week in camp Jill was alone in the Wigwoo; she had left the others watching or playing a badminton match and had hurried down to the cabin to finish a letter to her mother before swimming hour. Letters home were hard to write, Jill decided, sitting on the doorstep — or door-stone — and sucking the end of her pen: there was so much to tell, it was hard to know where to begin: this letter was nearly

finished; she had described the new table in the Log Cabin, the badminton tournament, Mitzi, the darling little mare Jan rode, and last Sunday's beautiful morning service when Big Chief had talked to them about friendship.

Jill ticked off these items and turned a fresh page. Should she or should she not tell about the thrilling event that was to take place that very afternoon? Yes, better write everything she could now, for Dan was going to take the mail to the station directly after supper.

Her pen began again:

'I've a perfectly nice surprise for you, Mum, dear. I'm going to take the First Swimming Test this afternoon!! Judy has been helping me and she says I'll be sure to pass and get my red cap!! And I'll be glad as glad, because I'm the only Ojibway who has a white one. I'm going to get ready now, so I'll leave this letter open and just add afterwards "I've got it!" and you'll know I'm the very happiest person in all this happy place.'

Jill stood up and stretched. Um-m, she was rather tired after badminton, but it had been lots of fun. Now for a swim.

She was in her bathing suit in less than the usual 'half a sec,' but held the hated white cap in her hand for a moment before putting it on.

'Farewell, old cap,' she murmured. 'This is your last appearance, be sure of that; I'll burn you to-night . . . 'cept that you'd smell awfully. . . . Let me see . . . umpty-umpty-umpty-um! No . . . umpty-ump. . . . '

Jan and Gay came tumbling in, throwing off their middies as they entered.

'Whew! It's ninety in the shade! Jill, you should have waited; we beat Sheila and Ann to frazzles! Jan was wonderful!'

'Out with it, Jilly. I know you've got a new poem in your head,' observed Jan. 'Cos why? 'Cos of the sweetly silly smile upon your lips.'

Jill took this as an insult and threw a pillow at Jan, but refrained from being *too much* insulted because then, of course, she wouldn't be able to spout her poem. And what was the use of being a poet unless you could share your fun?

'Farewell, little cap, farewell!
You're still mine for an hour or so,
Then I'll set you on fire
And a new one acquire,
Farewell, little cap, farewell!'

recited Jill dramatically.

'Fine!' laughed Gay. 'Now come along and demonstrate. What a mess this room is in! Good thing for us Bee doesn't inspect in the afternoons.

If it weren't for Gee we'd be in disgrace half the time. I believe she picks up your things every day, Jill Grier.'

'She's an angel,' cried Jill penitently. 'I'll put her in a poem some day. Thanks, Gay, those *are* my stockings. I've been hunting for 'em all day. Well, for quite a while anyway. To-morrow I'll have a grand house-cleaning. You'll see.'

When they reached the beach Judy had just blown the horn as a signal that all — even White Caps — might now enter the water. She, herself, however, was not quite ready to go in.

'Miss Dunstan is detained and has asked me to go out to the first diving-raft for fifteen minutes, Jilly,' explained Judith, jumping down into a row-boat and slipping the oars into place. 'I'm sorry, but it's surely warm enough, so you won't get chilled; you can play about or go in with the others until I come back, can't you?'

'Sure I can,' said Jill promptly. 'Don't hurry, old dear, I'm longing for a nap and nearly every-body's at the rafts, so I'll stretch out right here in the shade of the canoes and have forty winks and be ready for a high dive when you come back.'

But she was soon disturbed. Di came and took away not only the canoes but Jill's patch of shade. It *was* hot. She wandered out on the little dock

and sat dabbling her feet in the cool water. A small perch tickled her toes, she shooed him away but back he came. Lots of fun being a fish or a mermaid this sort of weather.

'If I had but one wish
To be something quite small,
I should change to a fish
I've no doubt at all.

Not bad . . . I must remember it for Jan. . . . But no, I shouldn't like to live down there.'

Without realizing what she was doing Jill was yielding once more to the old fascination of deep water — a strange fascination it was, for if she was attracted by a mysterious desire to look down into the cool green depths, she was just as strongly repelled by a haunting fear of what she might see there.

She leaned over, feeling her eyes drawn down, down, down, and almost lost her balance in her sudden fright when Gay appeared without warning around the corner of the dock and splashed her.

'Nearly asleep?' Gay asked, catching hold of the rope which ran along the side of the wharf and floating at her ease. 'Come on in: it's heavenly, and I shouldn't wait for Judy if I were you. I've just been out to the raft and three girls want to take their second test. She'll be half an hour any-

way. Babs is just beyond the rowboats; she could do just as well if you want to get it over, or *I* could.'

'No! No!' cried Jill with such emphasis that Gay felt piqued. Did Jill forget that she, Gay, was one of the best swimmers in camp and the proud possessor of a Blue?

'Oh well, just as you like,' she said with elaborate carelessness. 'Here come Jan and Pop. Pop is like a young porpoise. Float? I should say so. You can't sink her. Come on in, Jilly: be a sport.'

Jill could not withstand the coaxing persuasion of Gay's eyes and voice. Obediently she went back to the shore, waded in slowly and ducked to her chin. Then pushing off on one foot she swam backwards and forwards still within the five-foot line.

Gay watched her lazily but affectionately. Jilly was rather a lamb. . . . Funny that she was so frightened of water. . . . It probably would be all over if Judy once got her to dive or swim or float beyond her depth. Why was Jill so keen on having Judy as a teacher? Rather a lark to cut Judy out!

Gay above all things, loved larks. Her pretty eyes sparkled, and Jill, swimming back from the moored rowboat, was met halfway by a Gay in her most delightful mood, a Gay who seemed to have

not a thought in the world but how to make the time of waiting pass pleasantly.

The two had this part of the beach to themselves. It *was* fun. Gay gamboled about like a puppy or a porpoise, made Jill tow her by one foot and then did the same for Jill, played leapfrog, and raced her to the canoe dock for a prize of peanuts to be delivered to the winner that night after supper. Jill won the race. Resting against the dock she looked out to the raft and cried happily, 'Judy's getting into her boat now.' The coming test seemed an ordeal no longer. Swimming was *easy*.

'Race you back with one hand for *two* bags of peanuts,' shouted Gay. 'One, two, three, and away!' Halfway across she stopped and cried, 'Bother! Botheration!'

'What's the matter?' said Jill, looking over her shoulder.

'My beloved old bangle has slipped off. You can have the peanuts. I've got to find it before somebody else comes along and the sand gets all churned up.'

Jill turned about, of course, to help if she could, and swam to where Gay was standing on the sandy bottom peering down.

'Don't put your feet down, Jilly, please,' she

said quickly, as Jill stopped beside her. 'You'll stir up the sand. Is that it? No? Wait a minute — I'll go down to the bottom. Just swim slowly about.'

Gay went under water for a long minute or two while Jill anxiously paddled about, but when she emerged triumphantly holding something in one hand she was a little farther away from shore and Jill followed eagerly to see if it really was the bangle.

'Sold this time,' said Gay, 'but I saw something else shining and didn't wait to get it. Half a second and I'll show you.'

Down she went, and up again in almost the promised half-second, but again a little farther away.

This time she held up the bangle in triumph.

'Come and put it on for me, Jilly. It'll be a kind of award. I'm the champion diver in five feet of water, I am. Well, perhaps, a little more than five feet.' Then, as Jill came nearer: 'There's the loveliest bit of pink granite on the bottom here. Hold your nose, keep your feet going and put your face under, Jilly, and you'll see where my bangle was.'

Jill held her nose and put her face under water obediently; she didn't like doing it . . . but she

needn't swim any longer, she'd stand on bottom. . . .

There was a startled, strangled cry, a threshing of the water, and Jill's horror-stricken, reproachful eyes merged. 'It's deep,' she gasped — 'deep — Gay — take me ——'

'Not me,' laughed Gay. 'You're all right, Jilly — keep cool — just go on swimming the way you were — stop whacking about like that with your hands — keep your feet moving — there, you're O.K. — look, I'll go right down and walk there and you'll see how safe it is ——'

Jill didn't hear a word. She was far from being O.K. Icy terror had taken possession of her, and, as Gay disappeared under water again, Jill clutched wildly at her, missed her, and went down, down into the depths she so long had feared. . . . She suffocated, panted, struggled for breath — Oh! Oh! for the sweet light and air above. . . . But no, she was choking. . . . Gasping and struggling, she grasped Gay's shoulder, and with a supreme effort to pull herself out of the deadly clinging, stifling water, she gripped, and clung, and twisted about Gay with such a fierce, desperate hold, that all Gay's knowledge of how to rid one's self of the drowning person's clutch in order to save him, availed her nothing. Gay struggled and fought . . . .

If only she could call. . . . But one cannot call under water. . . . So down, down the two went like a great stone, sinking to the bottom.

An eternity afterwards, Jill became conscious of a drumming in her ears, and then Judy's voice saying sharply, 'Jill's all right — there — now — one, two, three — one, two, three — that's right — get away, the rest of you — keep time with Jan — steady, Babs — Docky'll be here any minute — wrap Jill in my coat, it's on the beach — rub her legs and arms — keep time with Jan, Babs — one, two, three ——'

Jill wondered drowsily what Jan and Judy were doing. . . . Canoe practice or something. . . . As for her she'd go to sleep. . . . How cold it was. . . . Judy was to come. . . . Where was she? Never mind, she'd go to sleep.

'Of course Gay tried to, silly,' she heard a voice whisper far, far away, 'but Jill clutched her so hard she couldn't get rid ——'

With a sudden cry Jill remembered and tried to sit up. 'Gay?' she gasped. 'Where's Gay?'

'She's right here, honey,' said Judy's comforting voice. 'Don't worry. She's breathing all right now, and Docky's coming down the path this very minute, and she'll give you both a hot drink and wrap you up in blankets.'

Jill tried to see Gay but couldn't, her head felt queer, there must be tears in her eyes. But she could believe Judy. Gay! Gay! She'd pulled her down almost to death. . . . Perhaps Judy had *not* told her the truth.

She gripped Judy's arm.

'Is it *true*, Judy — is she all right?'

'Right as you are— Docky's giving her a stimulant now.'

Jill's cold little fingers relaxed their hold, she closed her eyes, there was a sudden drumming again in her ears, and then soft, strange blackness.

When Jill woke she was lying wrapped up warmly in one of the cots in the little Infirmary. She felt snug and comfortable, but only for a minute, then memory woke too. Dr. Symons bent over her at the first tiny movement and without waiting for a word answered the agonized look in Jill's blue-shadowed eyes.

'Gay's having a nice sleep,' she said cheerfully. 'You'll both feel as spry as crickets in another hour. She was asking about you just a few minutes ago. Suppose you follow her good example and have another nap.'

Jill shook her head.

'I'm not like Gay,' she said slowly. 'She was — brave — and tried to save me — and I was a

coward — and — and — Dr. Symons, could I speak to Judy just for a minute — *please*.'

'Of course you may,' said the doctor soothingly. 'I'm going up to the Hall to order a supper tray for you and I'll ask her to come and pay you a little visit.'

It was the longest fifteen minutes before Judy appeared that Jill had ever known. Over and over she pictured the scene of her terrible fear — a needless fear, she could see now. She knew perfectly well how to keep herself afloat. Then Gay's attempt to rid her once for all of this foolish dread. Her own struggle, and her horrible clutching of Gay and dragging her down. How could she ever face Gay again? or the others? She'd better go away and hide herself; she wasn't fit to be at Camp Conqueror. . . . How everybody must despise her! . . . Could any one despise her more than she despised herself?

At last there was Judy.

'Coward? Nonsense! Everybody in the whole world clutches anything or anybody when they think they're drowning — sure they do. Ask Big Chief or Docky, they'll tell you. It's too bad you were frightened of deep water, but you aren't now. Why, you swam ever so far over your depth and didn't know it, so you'll never be scared again.

You had some sort of complex — Docky'll explain it — all doctors know about them — but you've got it beaten now. That's why Gay ——'

But at the mention of Gay the blessed feeling of relief which had been stealing over Jill disappeared, and pain, sharp, quick pain made itself felt again.

'Judy, I nearly killed her. She won't be able to bear the sight of me.'

'Well, perhaps the sight of you will be a little lesson to her,' said Judy, somewhat grimly. 'She's forgiven you, I guess, some time ago; she sent a message to you and as nearly as I can remember, it was would you *please, please* forgive her.'

'*What?*' cried Jill in huge astonishment.

Judy nodded solemnly.

'She's down in Big Chief's cabin, propped up before the fire, drinking a cup of soup. I can't say she looks very happy though. I agreed with her: it was a horrid *mean* thing to do, to coax you out like that with her story of a bangle. I didn't believe there was a girl in Camp who would do such a thing.'

The color rushed to Jill's face.

'She — she wanted to help me, Judy — and I ——'

'Now that's forbidden,' said Judy. 'Two things

are. Don't ever say, even to yourself, that you're *afraid* — of deep water or anything — promise.'

'I'll try,' said Jill bravely.

'And secondly, don't say again, or think again, that you nearly killed Gay. She's looking much brighter than you are at this present moment. How would it be if you wrote her a little note and forgave her, so she'll sleep more soundly to-night. And — neither Jan nor I have had any supper. I found poor Jan getting rid of her feelings by chopping wood up near the tennis courts. Suppose we have supper together — on the above conditions, be it understood. There, that's a good lamb. Now let me see if there are any gold specks left in your eyes.'

Jill's eyes were able to shine — just a little — for Judy. Oh, Judy was a rock — a shelter — in a time of storm.

Next morning the sun shone and the water danced, the bugle blew, and the campers raced down to the lake to bathe, the bugle blew again and Jill was hungry and ate her breakfast, just as if nothing strange and terrible had happened. Well, not exactly as if nothing had happened, for she felt within her not only hunger but a miserable, shrinking feeling. How would the others greet her? Would they stare coldly or pretend that they didn't see her at all?

But it was very easy: casual nods and good-mornings. 'Glad you're all right again, Jilly.' 'When will you play me a game of badminton?' ''Lo, Jilly — don't forget we've got to settle about that kitchen table to-day.' Even Gay's greeting was ordinary and matter-of-fact. ''Morning, Jilly, nice day for our picnic at the cabin, isn't it?'

Quite ordinary words, but there was a wistfulness in the lovely eyes that Jill had never seen before, and the quick little squeeze she gave Jill's arm as they settled into their chairs meant any number of things. Jill's heart sang a song of gratitude. How good they all were to her! Too good.

This thought was still uppermost in her mind as she went up the little path to the Wigwoo. Back of her laughing words at breakfast time and her consultation with Jan about the luncheon to be packed for the picnic, was a teasing little question: Weren't they making it *too* easy for her? She'd been a coward; she'd shown a conspicuous lack of coolness and bravery. Imagine Jan doing what she had done! Perhaps she'd forget and be like that again if there were not some punishment. Think of the hero of 'The Four Feathers' and all he went through to make up for *his* cowardice.

The Wigwoo looked very tidy. Gee had evidently put away all Jill's belongings except the

torn white bathing cap, that she had hoped to destroy last night.

'I'd better keep you, you miserable wretch,' Jill said aloud, picking it up. She turned it about absently, her thoughts still with the story of the redeeming of those four white feathers, symbols of cowardice. Then suddenly she nodded her head, took four glass-headed tacks from the box she had used when she hung the pictures, and solemnly pinned the cap above her bed.

'There,' she said, stepping back and looking at her pledge. 'That'll remind me, the pins will be the four feathers. They're too good and kind here, they wouldn't send me white feathers no matter *how* I deserved them. But I shan't forget, and if I ever can do anything brave — why perhaps you won't need to stay there always, you horrid little white cap. I'll tell Jan and she can decide — darling old Jan, she'd want to pull you down now — and so would Gay.'

CHAPTER VI

SIR GILLIAN, SLAYER OF BEARS

'It's beautiful, Pip,' declared Jill earnestly. 'I don't know how you did it so neatly. Putty's such slippery, sticky stuff!'

Pip smiled proudly at the window-frame propped up before her and gave an extra pat to the right-hand corner. Her appearance bore out the truth of putty being slippery, sticky stuff, for bits of it were firmly attached to various parts of herself and her disreputable-looking clothes. But Pip was blissfully happy.

'Jan showed me how,' she said. 'This is the front window, so it has to be specially good.'

Jill inserted a little vine into the moss she was using to fill the chinks between the logs, and stepped back to get the effect.

'What do you think, Pip, will vines make it look too — too — artistic? We don't want that, you know . . . just homey and comfy. That was a good idea of Gay's, wasn't it, to stain the light part of the logs?'

Pip tore herself reluctantly from her engrossing task and gave her attention to the merits and de-

merits of vines in the chinks. A smudge of putty on one side of her freckled nose detracted somewhat from the gravity of her expression.

'Looks nice to me,' she said finally, after standing a full minute, head on one side, bright eyes fixed on Jill's handiwork. 'I mean, if it were *my* home I'd like little vines on it. They'll grow in the moss, won't they?'

'Sure, they will,' answered Jill, patting another into place.

'Jilly, wouldn't it be fun to have a cabin like this for one's very own and be able to wash all the dishes and sweep the floor every single morning, and plant morning glories under the windows?'

'Well, I don't know,' said Jill vaguely. 'I'm not keen on sweeping floors myself.'

'Pop says we'll have one sometime, a cabin I mean, and she'll hunt and chop wood and I'll ——'

There was a sudden crashing in the underbrush and an excited voice called, 'Where are you? Pip!'

'Here,' called Pip as a berry-picking party headed by Pop and Shem came tumbling through the bushes.

'*What* do you think we saw?'

Pop was so excited she couldn't wait for an answer.

'Guess! Guess!' she cried, swinging her berry pail about.

'You'd never guess,' shrilled Shem. '*Never*, if you guessed fifty ——'

'A bear!'

The word exploded from Pop's lips; she couldn't wait another second, and the story came with a rush: 'We were picking on the side of the hill in the raspberry patch and heard something scrunching around and crackling the twigs 'n' we thought it was Jimmy Skunk, and Bet and Dee thought we'd better go home 'n' not risk it, but we said no, 'cos the berries were lovely 'n' Dee said, maybe it was a deer, or a lynx, or something like that, but Shem said it was a bear from the very first, didn't you, Shem?'

Shem nodded importantly.

'And we kept right on picking 'n' our pails were nearly full 'n' we heard an awful smashing of dry twigs, near us, 'n' I looked around some bushes — and *I saw his back* — big 'n' brown — he was bent over the berry bushes and didn't see me.'

Pop drew a long quivering breath.

'What did you do then?' asked Pip excitedly.

'What did we *do?*' repeated Pop, rather aggrieved at the anticlimax to her story. 'Why-ee — we came right down here — to see what we

had better do — we hadn't any weapons, you see.'

'Sure it was a bear?' asked Gee, who had joined the group. 'I've been in camp three years and I never even heard of a bear so near — right on our hill. Did any of the rest of you see it too? Well, then, maybe you just thought it was. Weren't you reading a Roberts story last night?'

Pop was terribly hurt by this skeptical attitude.

'It *was* a bear, wasn't it?' she appealed to the berry-pickers, not one of whom could say she actually saw it.

'I shouldn't be a bit surprised if you're right, Pop,' said Jill soothingly. 'I think it was a bear for sure.' In her mind's eye Jill saw the big brown woolly back bending over the berry bushes. 'You ought to go right down and tell Big Chief about it.'

Pop looked relieved. Jill believed her, anyway.

'Come on, Pip,' she said promptly. 'Let's report at headquarters.' Evidently the phraseology of some story was lurking in Pop's mind.

Pip looked longingly at her lump of putty.

'I'm not finished, quite,' she began.

But Pop promptly squelched this treason.

'I haven't half told you,' she said reproachfully.

With a sigh Pip laid down her putty.

'Don't let anybody do any of this window, Jill,

please. I want to do all of this one myself.' And the twins trotted away on their important errand.

Jill continued her chinking and sang softly to herself. 'Are you a camel or aren't you a camel?' She hoped with all her heart that the bear was really on the hill; it *would* be a lark. Cousin Sam, who had loaned her a hatchet, had not believed that she was camping in the true wilderness: well, he'd have to believe now. Jill was rapidly sketching a letter in which the tale of her own thrilling capture of this menace to the safety of the camp was the central theme, when Jan and Ham beached their canoe and unloaded the paint pots and tools they had collected from the Lodge.

Jan was skeptical, and decided that, even if the bear had been on the hillside, that was still a long way from the camp, and he'd certainly not come any nearer once he smelt humans. She was not very interested and she had to tell Jill about a challenge to a baseball match to-morrow which the Crees had just delivered by their runner to the chief of the Ojibways; that the picnic for the neighboring settlers' children was to be next week; also, that Di had said that they'd have to have a good practice that afternoon, for the Crees were famous for steady batting and swift running; also, did Jill know that their tribe was to furnish the

programme for the next Council Ring but one — a week from to-morrow? Gay thought a pantomime would be fun . . . Lord Ullin's Daughter, or Bluebeard, or something like that.

Entrancing bits of news! Jill forgot all about the bear in an exciting discussion as to the tribe's swiftest fielders, how they could entertain the children, and whether Gay would be best as Lord Ullin's daughter or Bluebeard's unhappy wife. Indeed she scarcely thought about Pop's story again until after supper when she sat in the Wigwoo re-reading her letters from home; her eye happened to fall on her old white bathing cap hanging beside Cousin Sam's hatchet in its leather safety case, and, by a train of associated ideas, it was easy to reach an exciting conclusion. An inevitable conclusion it seemed to Jill. Why not rid the camp of this dangerous wild beast? . . . A bear was really a terrible creature to have around. . . . A good crack from that hatchet on the bear's head would settle him . . . *and* everybody would see that Jill was no coward. The letters slipped to the floor as Jill sat staring at the hatchet and the white cap. But she didn't see them. What she did see was a small, brown-haired camper standing in the middle of a group of Ojibways who were shouting, 'What's the matter with Jilly? She's all right.'

This camper bore a faint resemblance to the Jill of the shining eyes and flushed cheeks who sat staring at the wall, but only a faint likeness, for Jill was quite ignorant of the beauty with which she flashed and sparkled and shone when a dream possessed her.

She rose presently and tried the edge of the axe — it was sharp as sharp — pulled from under her cot a cake box which had vexed Gee's tidy soul for days, and rushed up the trail to the Ark.

Pop and Pip, Shem and Ham were all at home as luck would have it, and entirely ready for any fun that was going. Jill unfolded her plan.

'It's so *fortunate*,' she concluded, 'the Ark being right beside the trail and the farthest up the hill, and a fine berry patch not far away, and the roof such a nice easy slope.'

Her auditors sucked the caramels she had thoughtfully provided and looked much impressed by this marshaling of undoubted facts.

'We could take up our blankets and pillows and spread them out on the roof and have some supper first — I've got a fruit cake Mum sent last week — and we could take turns keeping watch, and when the bear came — we'd whack him hard with our canoe paddles, and then I'd stun him with a blow from my hatchet.'

Jill saw herself again standing over the fallen monster dispatching him with swift strokes.

'How do you know the bear will come down this very trail?' asked Pip daringly — Pip, who usually accepted other people's plans, especially Jill's plans, without a question!

This was somewhat of a poser, and Shem seized the opportunity to remark that she didn't believe there was a bear at all in the camp.

An electric spark seemed to pass from Jill to Pop and from Pop back to Jill again. These two had no need for proofs and such-like rubbish. They *knew*.

'He'll come down here, all right, you'll see,' said Pop with enormous determination. 'What do bears like besides berries — we've lots of those — something else, yes, honey — and we had honey for breakfast this very morning. Pip, you go and coax some from Emma, and we'll sprinkle it along the trail and leave the open tin on the doorstep here. How many paddles had we better have, Jilly?'

Pip trotted off obediently. Emma was known to have a tenderness for her wide cheerful grin and to be unable to resist her entreaties for an extra piece of left-over pie or cake. Shem and Ham seized the opportunity to fortify themselves with

more caramels, one to each cheek, while Pop and Jill held a council of war. After all, there might be some fun, and, anyway, there was to be a feast.

Details of preparation kept Jill busy until 'Taps'; she had decided not to let Jan into the secret and had refused to formulate even to herself the reason for such an unusual proceeding. So she started guiltily when Jan suddenly put an arm around her shoulders as they stood facing the sunset waiting for all the campers to join the circle before singing 'Day is done.'

'What you been doing all evening, Jilly? I was looking everywhere for you. Gay wants you to be Lord Ullin's daughter, and they ought to decide about the costumes right away.'

'Oh, I think Gay should be the daughter; she'd look lovely; and we must have a wig of some sort for I'm sure her hair was streaming in the wind. Doesn't the ballad say so?'

'I forget,' said Jan. 'Ssh . . . Big Chief's ready.'

Jill almost wished Big Chief weren't there, and sternly repressed an uneasy little question that tried hard to make itself heard: would Big Chief approve of this way of getting rid of the bear? Well, Jill didn't know, but she wasn't going to try to find out. . . . That was certain and sure.

The other Wigwoos declared themselves des-

perately sleepy that night, for the afternoon's baseball practice had been unusually strenuous. Jill had not long to wait before their regular breathing told her that she could get up without fear of being detected. She had only partly undressed before getting into bed, and as she could be as quick and light as a kitten when the need arose, she was out of the cabin and up the trail to the Ark without wakening any one.

The night seemed surprisingly light although there was no moon, so that Jill did not need to use her flashlight, for which she was thankful.

Not a sound was to be heard from any of the little cabins: they stood opaquely black, as if enchanted, against the more transparent darkness of the night. Jill began to wonder if she had fallen asleep and it was really the middle of the night.

However, as she neared the Ark a stifled giggle betrayed the fact that some one else was awake in this mysteriously silent camp. She announced her arrival by a whispered 'Hist,' since that was the classic way of marking the arrival of hero or villain in the adventure stories she loved.

'Who goes there?' whispered Pop, entering into the spirit of the game.

'Friend,' answered Jill. 'Sir Gillian, Slayer of Bears!'

'Enter, Sir Gillian.'

'Look, Jilly,' began Shem eagerly, flashing on a light and disclosing a tray heaped with slices of watermelon. 'Judy brought it to us. I've cut the cake, too; and we can each take a piece and a slice of melon; I'll hand it up to you; you go on up; we've got the rugs and pillows and paddles and everything ready on the roof.'

'Judy is *dangerous*,' whispered Pop tensely. 'She suspects us of something: she said, "Now be good, Buddies, — no gallivanting about, remember." We said, no, we wouldn't, and she said, "Cross your hearts?" and we said, yes, we wouldn't leave the cabin this night. So she gave us the melon and went off.'

'Judy's awfully quick,' added Shem. 'She guesses like lightning, but she's a good scout and won't bother us, I guess, when we said we wouldn't leave the cabin.'

'She probably thought we were going to have a midnight feast,' said Ham chuckling, 'and we are. Come on, Jill, we've got a chair on a box at the back. Don't fall and waken the Music Box or they'll want half the food.'

The chair-and-box ladder was a bit shaky but the last parcel and the last person were safely hoisted up to the roof, without, apparently, attracting any one's attention.

Shem distributed the cake and melon, and for a few minutes nothing was to be heard but the soft crunchings of sharp little teeth and a few murmurs of satisfaction as the melon was finished.

'Funny it's so light,' observed Ham at length. 'However, the better to see you, my dear. Do you know, I'd forgotten all about the bear. Oh — oh! Look! Northern Lights!'

There were stifled exclamations of delight and surprise as the others gazed upwards. From some point far, far distant in the North, long lines of wavering light streamed out across the sky: the light was not bright, but softly luminous like the Milky Way: the long banners seemed to undulate gently, and Pip declared that she could see faint colors, something like a rainbow.

'Spooky, isn't it?' whispered Shem nervously. 'Like — ghosts in the sky. I wish we had something hot to drink. It'll be awfully cold up here before morning: there's the breeze beginning now.'

'We have something,' said Ham triumphantly. 'I was just waiting till somebody asked. We've a whole thermos of cocoa; that's my contribution; the cups are beside you, Jilly, wrapped in hankies — clean ones — so as not to rattle. You hold the flash and I'll pour. Nobody's going to see us way up here.'

The cocoa and its maker were praised, and her health and the health of the bear drunk, or at least, the latter toast had just been proposed when Pop whispered urgently, 'Somebody coming! Lie flat!'

This is not an easy thing to accomplish on a sloping roof with a cup of hot cocoa in one's hand, but somehow it was done swiftly and almost noiselessly. Shem could not restrain a muffled exclamation as her cheek touched something cold and slippery — her watermelon rind — and then there was absolute silence in which five pairs of ears could distinctly hear some one or some thing moving in the underbrush on the side of the hill, and up and down five spines coursed the thrills which only a true adventurer knows. In the excitement of the feast the conspirators had almost forgotten the possibility of a bear's arrival; indeed to all but Jill and Pop the probability of his existence was very vague and shadowy. But now it seemed there was something in the story Pop had told. Certainly there was something large and clumsy moving on the hill. Skunks, they knew, stepped daintily and quietly, even awkward-looking porcupines made little noise, while this, whatever it might be, walked heavily and clumsily.

The breeze made a sighing sound in the tree-

tops; a night-hawk and two bats wheeled and circled near them; the sounds on the hillside ceased. But Jill, her pulses beating fast, decided that the time had come for action.

'You take a paddle, Pop,' she whispered, 'and give the other to Ham. Tell Shem she *must* be quiet. I've got my axe ready.'

Jill's excitement was infectious, and munitions of war were handed out while hearts beat high. This *was* an adventure! Presently they heard the breaking of dry branches again, this time much nearer the cabin. Jill clutched her axe tightly. Now, if only ——!

'O — oh!' cried Shem suddenly as a bat circled so low that a wing grazed her cheek. Instantly from the screen of bushes near by came the sound of a man's voice:

'What's the matter? It's Dan.'

There was no answer. Jill had put a hand tightly over Shem's mouth.

'Anything wrong?' called Dan again.

'I guess not, Dan,' said a voice which the guilty five recognized as Judy's. 'Somebody called out in her sleep probably — we sometimes do.'

'Very well, Miss; half-past ten and all's well!'

So it was Dan on the hillside making a round of the Camp. . . . And only half-past ten! . . . It

seemed like the middle of the night! . . . And Judy was awake up in the Counselor's Hut! . . . And the rest of the cake had fallen over the edge of the roof and two cups of cocoa were spilled!

What a mess! And all because of a bat — and Shem. Shem was distinctly unpopular for a few minutes, but gradually, as Dan's footsteps retreated towards the Lodge and silence reigned once more, the watchers made themselves more comfortable on the roof, shared the remaining cocoa with strict impartiality — after all Shem was very penitent — and settled down to a long vigil. Though indeed it might not be long: any minute, Jill warned them, they might have to jump into action, but now that they'd been warned and knew what to do, they could go to sleep, and she would take the first watch; they were not to forget the plan of battle, that was most important: let the bear come right up to the door to get the honey pot, whack him *hard* with the paddles, and then she would finish him with her axe. Dan realized the danger to the Camp, or what was he doing on the hill at this time of night? His fears were lulled and he was going off duty, but not the brave Ojibways. No, indeed. Think of the honor to the tribe when the slain body of the dangerous foe lay stretched stiff and cold on the trail!

Even Shem was impressed by this harangue, the style of which was somewhat cramped owing to the necessity of whispering.

Blankets felt good, for the breeze was becoming chilly; to the south the hosts of stars were glittering in a sky that looked almost wintry in its brilliance; to the north the Aurora was more diffused, more softly luminous, more exquisitely lovely than ever.

Jill, lying snugly wrapped in her rug, looked up at the sky with its great pageant of rhythmic beauty and gradually all thought of her high and dangerous enterprise fell away. How wonderful the sky was at night, and how strange — even frightening if one began to think about it! Was it'only a year or two ago that the sky had been the floor of heaven and the stars placed there like beautiful electric globes to lighten the way of the people who had to be out after nightfall? . . . Silly, of course, to have believed that for so long, because anybody could see that the sky was not solid like a floor, and the farther people like aviators went up into the air, the farther and farther away did the sky stretch above their heads. At least, it was something like that, that Miss Downing had told them at school, and she'd shown them the way the sun and the moon, the stars and the planets

whirled around in space. It hadn't seemed real some way or other to Jill, so she hadn't thought much about it. But this sky looked real, dreadfully real. What a lot of stars there were! Millions and millions. Miss Downing had said that the nearest fixed star was billions, or perhaps it was trillions of miles away, and the light from it took years to come near enough to our little earth so we could see it. Some of those tiny little twinkling stars were far, far larger than this earth that seemed so big.

Jill shrank a little under her blankets as an uncomfortable thought emerged. How tiny she must be! How very unimportant! It couldn't matter very much what happened to her, or what she did — in such a tremendously big universe . . . but, yes, it *did* matter. Mum and Dad thought it did, and Big Chief. . . . She knew a lot about stars and she was going to talk about them some night soon around the camp-fire.

Big Chief's happy, smiling face and her serene, untroubled eyes floated for a moment before Jill's drowsy vision and then Jill, too, like the others was fast asleep.

She woke with a sudden start. Where was she? Oh, how her back ached! Whatever . . .? Oh, yes . . . the bear! Was he . . .? *Yes!* She was *not*

dreaming. She could distinctly hear stealthy movements on the trail. . . . It was the bear! . . . He was coming closer! . . . He must be near the cabin now!

'Wake up,' she whispered tensely and shook Pop into alertness. 'Get your paddles. He's coming!'

Five hearts thumped in five throats and five pairs of eyes strained into the darkness.

'There he is,' said Jill. 'Look! almost at the corner. . . . Let him get a little nearer and then whack when I give the word.'

Five pairs of eyes blinked and gazed at the trail near the corner of the cabin and five hearts thumped louder than ever. Jill had spoken truly. A big, massive body was bending down to the ground as if looking for the honey; but even as they looked, the dark woolly head was raised and a forward step taken. Pop and Ham gasped, and raised their paddles. Another shuffling step or two nearer, and then they struck with might and main. Ham's blow glanced off the creature's shoulder but Pop's took good effect, for the big brown body sagged sideways, and fell heavily. In a flash Jill had taken a flying leap to the ground and was standing over the bear with her axe raised for a crashing blow: 'Stop! Help!' came a muffled cry from the bear,

and, 'Stop!' shouted an indignant voice, as arm and hatchet were seized in a strong grasp.

Jill's brain reeled. Surely she must be going crazy! Was she dreaming? . . . Was this a nightmare?

A flashlight was snapped on, and Jill's captor bent over the struggling bear.

'You all right, Babs? That's good,' she heard a familiar voice say. 'My word, these young heroes might have killed you.'

Judy's voice was full of relief.

Jill obediently helped Babs crawl out of the bearskin rug which usually lay before Big Chief's fire. Her cheeks burned with mortification. Heroes? Oh, they'd been nicely fooled. . . . They'd be the joke of the camp! Babies, they'd been, to believe that they could tackle a bear!

'No, I'm not hurt,' declared Babs, chuckling good-humoredly as she rubbed her shoulder. 'But I certainly would have been if this rug weren't so thick, and if you hadn't been quick, Judy. Goodness me, Jilly, you're a young Jack-the-Giant-Killer. I never believed any of you would dare! Seems to me the laugh's on us, Judy.'

'Looks like it,' said Judy, grinning. 'Well, we gave 'em a real thrill, anyway.'

'What's the row?' called several voices from the neighboring cabins. 'What's up?'

'Tell you in the morning,' said Judy in a low voice. 'Hush, now, don't waken everybody — though I don't see why the whole camp isn't awake! Be good. Go to sleep . . . and I'll tell you in the morning.'

'Tell you in the morning!' The phrase kept ringing in Jill's ears as she crept down to the Wigwoo and her own bed. *Oh, dear*, how they'd be teased!

And of course they were. It was much too good a story to keep. But forewarned is forearmed; the would-be heroes took their teasing well, and at Council Ring that evening Jill turned laughter into hearty applause.

It happened this way: the scroll-keepers each had something to say about the killing of the bear: the Blackfeet had managed a joke or two and the Crees had written up the incident as if it were a new chapter in the story of Don Quixote; then the Chickasaws scribe stood forth in the firelight, struck an attitude and recited these lines:

'Who heard the story of a bear,
A bold and fearsome beast,
Who'd come to find the C.C. girls
And on them grimly feast?
Our Jilly.

'Who lay all night upon the roof,
Him hoping to have killed?

Who might instead with her sharp axe
A Counselor's blood have spilled?
Our Jilly.'

Prolonged applause and hearty laughter greeted this effusion, and then some one — an Ojibway perhaps — cried,

'What's the matter with our Jilly?' And the response was as hearty as the laughter.

'She's all right!'

Oh, how *nice* of them! Weren't all Camp Conqueror girls *bricks*. Oh, she wished she could tell them — thank them.

In a sudden glow of emotion, Jill jumped to her feet.

'O Big Chief, greetings. I, Jill Grier, of the Ojibway tribe would like to thank everybody for being so — so decent. I don't know whether I can make it rhyme, but I'll try.

'Who quite forgives your teasing her
For she deserves it much,
Who thinks that C.C. girls are — fine
And — wishes — she — were such?
Me, Jilly.'

Thunders of applause this time! And happiness for Jill. Such happiness. What a *friendly* place was Camp Conqueror!

CHAPTER VII

FRIENDS

'I wish I was a fish
I wish I was a fish,'

sang Jill, who was watering the ferns she had transplanted from the swamp.

'I wish you were a tidy camper; that would satisfy me,' said Gay, opening the door of the Wigwoo. 'Do you know, Jill Grier, that Bee marked our cabin "D" this morning? She said we were disgracefully untidy. I looked in to see what was wrong and your things are all over the place, clothes on every one of the four beds, and a litter of plants on the floor.'

'I'm frightfully sorry,' said Jill, dropping her tin of water and taking a flying leap or two which landed her quite out of breath on the Wigwoo's door-stone.

'It *is* a mess! I meant to have a grand house-cleaning of my own and I discovered a bucket of aquatic plants I'd intended to classify so I began to do them, and then I remembered the ferns I'd planted around the birch stump and I thought I'd better attend to those first of all. The darling little new leaves are beginning to uncurl; some way or

other they make me think of kittens; Gay, don't you simply adore kittens?'

But Gay refused to take any notice of this red herring drawn so unconsciously by Jill across the trail. 'And cake under your bed,' she continued indignantly.

'Yes, isn't it just mean,' said Jill. 'I cut up what was left and put it out on the cover of the box for us to eat after supper yesterday, and forgot about it, and a chipmunk must have gotten in, I guess. It's nearly all gone or carried off into corners. That's one reason why I thought I'd give the whole place a *specially* good cleaning.'

Jill's tones were quite as gloomy as Gay's by this time. Gay and Gee were very keen to win the cup for the tidiest cabin. It was too bad!

Pop and Pip came racing up the trail in dripping bathing suits.

'Di wants you to hurry, Jilly,' called Pop. 'She says you promised to be at the basket-ball court at eleven and it's after that now.'

'And Madge was looking for you,' added Pop. 'It's about something for the scroll at Council Ring. She looked sort of — cross. . . . What's the matter, Jilly?'

Jill had covered her face with her hands at this last reminder of her sins of omission.

'This is my unlucky day, no mistake,' she groaned dismally.

But there wasn't time to remain long in this penitent attitude. She snatched a soft hat from the tumbled heap on the bed and a bandana to cover the burn on her neck and fled, pausing for just a moment to say solemnly to the startled twins:

'You take warning by me, Buddies. Be sure your sins will find you out. I left undone a lot of things I ought to have done, and now I'll have to stay home from the picnic this afternoon and do them and I'm just *crazy* to go.'

The last words she shouted over her shoulder. Oh, dear! It was fun being an Ojibway, but hard too, belonging to a tribe that was so very ambitious: Di was always pulling up some team or other because they must win a game for 'the honor of the Ojibways' and Madge wanted their scroll to be best at every Council Ring. . . . Oh, dear! . . . And it was going to be such a wonderful picnic — a Naturalists' Field Expedition! They were going to hunt for Indian pipes and fringed orchids and they were going to cook their own supper. . . . Oh, bother! Why hadn't she written that account of the canoe races for Madge yesterday!

'Don't be cross with me, Di, dear,' she said in

a coaxing little voice as Di shook her head at her. 'I'm as cross as two sticks, or three, myself, and one reason is that I forgot all about this game.'

'You're a bad girl, Jilly,' said Di, her face clearing at once; she *had* felt inclined to be vexed, for the game couldn't begin until the truant arrived; but no one could be angry with Jill for long.

'She's "got a way" with her,' said Di to herself, watching Jill, who was throwing herself wholeheartedly into the game. 'They'll all play better just because she's here.'

Jill, still penitent, insisted on carrying the ball down to the Lodge where such things were kept and, as the dinner bugle had already sounded some time before, she made a sketchy toilet by washing her hands in the lake and drying them on her bandana, and hoped that no one would notice her extremely untidy hair.

But late as Jill was, Pop and Pip were later still. and at their entrance all the campers sang:

'You're late, you're late,
You're very late,
You're very, very late,
We think that you should now explain
The reason why you're late.'

The twins made their apologies to Miss Moore and hurried to their table. Not often were they

tardy at mealtimes, for late-comers were apt to have small chance of second helpings. Pop flashed a triumphant smile at Jill before she began her dinner. Jill smiled back and wondered idly why Pop seemed to be so pleased with herself. She, Jilly, wasn't pleased with herself, not a bit, quite contrariwise. Eh bien! No use groaning, and there was one mitigation of her woes — butterscotch pie for dessert!

Directly after dinner the Naturalists made ready for their picnic; they wanted every hour between now and eight o'clock, when they were due at the camp again, for the expedition they had planned. Gay hurried off to check over the stores for supper and get the drinking-cups. Loraine departed to the engineer's hut to borrow a couple of buckets in which to carry aquatic plants; and Jan, who was to help with the boats, went down to the dock to see that all was in readiness. Jill ran after Jan and surveyed the fleet disconsolately.

'Be nice to me, Jan, for it's a hard world,' she was lamenting, when the twins came rushing down the path.

'Jill! Jill!' Pop called. 'Aren't you coming back to the Wigwoo?'

'Not till I have to,' answered Jill mournfully. 'I'll see you off first.'

'Tell her, Pop,' cried Pip, dancing around like a wild Indian.

'You're *going*,' shouted Pop. 'Madge says you are to and *we* did the cabin. It's perfectly *lovely!* Hurry, Jilly, we couldn't go without you.'

Jill was already sprinting up the path: she bestowed two rapturous hugs on the good brownies who had done her work, exclaimed ecstatically at the extraordinary neatness of the Wigwoo, hunted frantically for a pair of thick stockings — where *had* she put them? — found Madge and promised faithfully to have a perfectly beautiful article ready for the scroll to-morrow, and was down at the beach again in time to take a pair of oars in the last rowboat.

Four canoes and two rowboats each with its happy, chattering crew were already strung out in a long line heading for the portage at the head of the lake. The plan was to leave the boats, with the exception of one canoe, at the portage, and walk across to Little Moose Lake where a search would be made for specimens of wild-flowers to add to the club's already large collection; the canoe would be portaged and used by some of the party; and supper would be cooked at Little Moose Lake before making the return trip.

Miss Maxwell and Judy had evidently gone on

in one of the canoes and Babs and Jan were left to bring up the rear in the last canoe.

Jill was so happy to be going on the picnic, that she bubbled over with all sorts of fun, and her songs and jokes and laughter interfered so seriously with her rowing, that the big clumsy rowboat which she had promptly christened the Fairy Queen fell farther and farther behind Babs and Jan in the red canoe.

'Come on, you sluggards,' called Jan, as they waited patiently for the Fairy Queen to catch up to them.

There were loud protestations at this insulting epithet. Only one pair of oars could be used, it seemed, the second pair of oarlocks being of no use whatever.

'Hurry up, Jill, you needn't be quite so long about it,' called Babs a few minutes later. 'The first canoes are landing.'

'She *is* hurrying,' shouted Pop defiantly. 'It's a big heavy boat. Don't you wait for us if you don't want to.'

Her meaning was quite clearly: '*We* don't want you to wait: we'll have a much better time by ourselves.'

Pop and Pip were stout champions of anything and everything that Jill said or did, for, however

much other campers might jeer at the episode of the bear, the honey pot, and the hatchet, to the twins it remained the most thrilling of adventures and Jill a heroine to be followed devotedly.

Gee's entreaties were added to those of Babs, and as Jill had no intention of being left behind, she bent to the oars with such energy that she caught up to the red canoe once more. She really enjoyed the pull, delighted in the knowledge that her muscles were getting stronger every day, and, feeling rather proud of the speed she had just made, expected Jan to praise her. Instead of which Jan looked over her shoulder and said almost crossly: 'Don't be such an infant, Jilly; we don't want to spend the afternoon getting to the portage!'

Jill was so surprised at this entirely unlooked-for attack that she said nothing at all but continued to pull the Fairy Queen along with strong, steady strokes. Pop and Pip looked their indignation: Pop indeed seemed to be silent only because she could not think of a sufficiently crushing retort.

Jill rowed quietly but her thoughts were in a whirl. How mean of Jan! . . . Whatever had made her so horrid! . . . Oh, well, perhaps she didn't intend to be cross.

'Are we happy? Are we happy?' hummed Pop.

'What's your total number of specimens now,

Jilly?' asked Pip who was taking the keenest interest in Jill's collection.

'Seventy-eight,' answered Jill promptly. 'The last twenty are going to be hard to get.'

'There's some cardinal flower, that's a sign of August,' cried Pop suddenly, pointing to where several of the tall loose spikes of blossoms reflected their glorious glowing color in the still water. 'Let's get it now before the others find any.'

They were almost at the portage, and instead of keeping straight on another hundred yards, Jill swerved to the right so that Pop might get the scarlet beauties. It would only take a minute or two more. The water was not deep here and Pop, feeling perfectly safe, climbed right out on the bow of the boat, the better to reach through the reeds for the flowers.

Nobody knew how it happened. Jill must have given a sudden pull on one oar or perhaps Pop was unduly careless, but, whatever the cause, the result was undeniable. Pop slid suddenly off her precarious seat and with a loud splash and a great shrieking from Pip, fell overboard.

She was up on her feet in a moment, got her specimens, climbed back into the boat, and proceeded to wring the water out of knickers and middy with great good-humor. They were all

laughing at some nonsense when they landed a couple of minutes later and were quite unprepared for the reception which awaited them.

Miss Maxwell, Judy, and Babs all expressed unqualified disapproval of the mishap. Either Babs or Jan must have said something about their behavior on the trip over, for Miss Maxwell was very severe, very severe indeed. Pop and Pip were the youngest of the campers, and, as upsetting a boat or falling out of a boat was almost an unforgivable sin at Camp, Miss Maxwell evidently did not relish the fact that she would have to report the mishap on her return to Miss Moore. So, to the attempts of Jill and Pop and Pip, all speaking at once in an effort to explain their blameless intentions and the shallowness of the water, Miss Maxwell turned a deaf ear.

Jill did not hear the final summing-up of the matter because she was entirely engrossed in what Jan had just said to her. She had turned to Jan for support while Pop was volubly demonstrating how easily she had slipped off, and Jan — Jan! — had said in a low indignant voice: 'You've been a silly, a big silly. Miss Mac's quite right, you're not to be depended upon.'

Blank astonishment first and then anger sudden and flaming. Jill marched past Jan, her head high,

two bright patches on her cheeks, her eyes glowing.

The idea! To be spoken to like that for such a little thing! 'Not to be depended upon!' She, Jill Grier! Miss Mac had said it, but everybody knew she had a hot temper and said things she didn't mean, but *Jan!*

Jill ran ahead and joined Gay and Loraine. She didn't want to see Jan or Pop or Pip or Gee again. Gee was a ninny. Why didn't *she* speak up? *Oh!* It wouldn't bear thinking about.

The place had been well chosen for gathering flowers and the tins and buckets soon overflowed with an interesting-looking harvest. Jill made several good 'finds' in the first hour and expected to be able to add Scarlet Painted Cup, Wild Mint, Devil's Paint Brush and Joe Pye to her list, although the identification could not be completed until later. As a pleasure trip, however, the afternoon was entirely spoiled for her. *Jan!* To say such a thing! No, it wouldn't bear thinking about!

The whole party had worked its way around to the head of Little Moose Lake when the breeze veered, and with one accord they began to sniff. Smoke! Must be a fire somewhere about. Could it be a ranger's hut? No, the nearest one was north of the camp near the fire-tower.

Several pairs of sharp eyes spied the smoke at the same instant, and everybody started to run toward the smoking bushes not very far away.

'A forest fire!' cried some one and at those terrible words Miss Maxwell blew her whistle and called her party together: They mustn't go any nearer until she and Judy had investigated. . . . Fires were dangerous things and not to be treated lightly. . . . They had better sit down on the sand and rest while they could, because of course they would all do their best to put out the fire. . . . There was to be no more *nonsense.*

Pip winked at Jill at this last word but Pop looked as if she might explode with indignation at any minute.

Very soon Miss Maxwell called to them to come and bring the buckets and specimen tins. So there really was a fire. What fun!

The thrills caused by Miss Maxwell's commands were soon dissipated by the insignificant-looking fire they were called upon to extinguish: nothing exciting about a few smoking stumps and bushes. Miss Maxwell was a good organizer and soon had two lines of campers passing up buckets of water which she and Judy threw on the smoking underbrush and the patches of bright little flames which were licking up the dry moss. The line rotated

slowly so that no one girl should have more than her share of stooping to dip up the water or of inhaling the smoky atmosphere at the other end.

The fire had evidently been burning for some time: one stump was burned to an ash, a patch of young birches stood gauntly bare against the bright blue of the sky, there were black patches underfoot where once had been green mosses and dry leaves. But that was all. No roaring flames, no crashing of great trees. Surely one could hardly call this a real forest fire.

But there were stray mosquitoes quick to take advantage of their victims' helplessness. And it was hot, and the smoke instead of lessening under the deluge of buckets and buckets and buckets of water grew denser and more acrid, so that eyes and throats were beginning to sting. It wasn't all fun — trying to put out a fire.

The breeze freshened a little and a gust blew some dry leaves about. Suddenly there came a startled exclamation from Gay and she stamped quickly on a little blaze at her very feet; there was another cry from Babs, a quick retreat on the part of Judy and Miss Maxwell, and an ominous crackling.

Miss Maxwell's orders were quick and incisive: 'Break your lines, and go back to the shore. Fill

the buckets again; Jill, you and Gay get paddles from the canoe — no one go beyond Judy and myself; now, beat the moss with the paddles: the buckets here, Babs.'

Ten minutes, twenty minutes, half an hour of strenuous, hard, hot work and then Miss Maxwell declared that every one had worked splendidly and that as far as she could see the fire was *dead.* Three cheers greeted the pleasant bit of news. No one held the opinion any longer that there could be fun in a fire. Indeed for a number of the campers there had been some very unpleasant moments. Those little tongues of fire licking up the dry leaves, the moss, the loose birch bark, how malignant, how cruel, they had seemed! How swiftly they ran, how difficult they were to compass! If instead of that refuge of water behind them there had been a roaring wall of flame, how then would they have felt? They hadn't been *frightened,* of course, that went without saying, but they were all glad to hear that the wicked little flames which crept so fast when no one was watching were dead, quite, quite, dead.

'A drink! a drink!' shouted several hoarse voices and Gay was out into the canoe in a flash and back again with her buckets full of cool, fresh water. Oh, how good it tasted! Then hands and faces were

washed and confidences exchanged as to the feelings a fire might inspire even in the bravest hearts.

Miss Maxwell looked at her wrist-watch. 'Four o'clock,' she said. 'A bit early for tea. How would it be if some of you went on to the point where Babs is sure she can find the Indian pipe and I'll stay here with any one who doesn't want the extra walk, and keep watch that the fire doesn't break out again.'

'Oh, *no*,' said Jill impulsively. 'I mean, couldn't some one else be a guard because you'd love to see the little pipes standing like tiny ghost flowers under a big pine branch, and if you don't go they'll be spoiled before you see them for they turn black almost as soon as they are picked.'

Miss Maxwell smiled at Jill's eagerness.

'Please let Di and me stay, Miss Mac,' said Judy pleadingly. 'The fire seems absolutely out, and the point is only a little farther on. I was there last year and we found several lovely things.'

There seemed no real reason why Miss Maxwell should stay, but if she went, the others must go, too — all but three or four guards.

'Let me stay,' begged Jill, feeling vaguely that she ought not to have *all* the fun.

Miss Maxwell nodded, and, to Jill's surprise, Jan was the fourth of the little party left on guard.

Now why had Jan asked to stay? . . . Did she want 'to make up' for having been so nasty? . . . Well, she'd have to say the first word then.

They sat on the beach resting for a while and then Judy said idly, 'We found purple fringed orchids here last year, either just beyond the fire there to the right, or down there by those pines on the left. I can't remember which. We got some sort of flowers in both places last time.'

'Oh, Judy,' Jill was up again like a Jack-in-the-box. 'That's something Miss Mac wants very specially — almost as much as the Indian pipe. Which place shall we try first?'

'Both together,' said Judy, getting up more slowly. 'The others won't be long now. I'll have another look at the last remains of poor Mr. Fire and then you and Jan scout around the pines up there and Di and I will investigate the other spot. Everybody willing say "Aye." The ayes have it. Careful now, Jilly, don't go more than a few yards from shore so I can see you all the time.'

Jill kept close to Jan as they climbed over some fallen trees at the water's edge. All her anger was gone now. . . . She had been a silly the first part of the journey. . . . And Jan hadn't understood about Pop going overboard, how safe it was. . . . It had been horrid having Jan cross with her,

absolutely horrid. . . . Jan *ought* to take the first step, she really ought. . . . Then she, Jilly, would tell her it was perfectly all right and not to think about it again, and that she *deserved* it. . . .

But Jan only said, 'Nice little breeze out here and the mosquitoes seem to have gone. You've got a bite under one eye, Jilly.'

That is, that was all her voice said, but her eyes were saying, 'Let's be friends again, Jilly. Friends like you and me can't quarrel. I'm sorry.'

Jill heard it all but waited a little stubbornly for the spoken word. Jan hesitated and began, 'I'm —' then broke off to say quickly, 'I say, I believe there's a patch of those purple things right there in the moss at the foot of that birch tree!'

They ran forward, just a step or two, and then a terrible thing happened.

One moment the two girls were running toward the flowers at the foot of the tree and the next there was a sudden *bang!* like the crack of a giant pistol and the birch tree had crashed down smashing the tops off several young trees, and burying from sight a clump of delicate purple fringed orchids, and two friends who had not yet had time to make up a quarrel.

There was a stifled cry, a threshing about in the

leaves, and Jill emerged, a long red scratch on her white startled face.

'Jan!' she called.

There was no answer.

'Jan!'

Then she saw.

Jan lay with her shoulders pinned under the trunk of the tree, her face pressed down in the moss.

Jill tugged frantically at the heavy tree; it would not budge. 'Judy! Judy! Help! Come — quick!'

But Jan would suffocate before Judy could come. She must lift the tree, she *must!*

She stooped and found she could turn Jan's head a little, only a little, but that might mean air — if she could lift the tree even an inch, it might mean life — life for Jan.

Jill looked again at the tree. . . . If she couldn't lift it at its heavy end this side of Jan, perhaps she could a little farther down.

With a leap she passed Jan, caught the tree-trunk at a point where she could brace her knee against a branch and then threw all her strength of mind and soul and body into raising the weight from Jan's shoulders.

She pushed and panted with the terrific strain.

The cruel tree refused to budge. She could hear Judy and Di coming now, but they would have to climb over those fallen trees at the water's edge and seconds counted — for Jan.

Again she braced herself, again she tugged, and this time the tree gave to her upward push and the horrible weight was lifted, if ever so little from Jan. Oh, joy!

But she had scarcely time to experience the triumph and relief of that lift of the pressure when she felt a searing hot sensation in her arm and to her horror saw that the bark on the tree-trunk was smoking . . . little tongues of flame were creeping around her arm and knee: Jan? No, the flame seemed to be only on the upper side of the wood, but she couldn't be sure.

'Judy! Quick! Quick!' she cried.

Another interminable moment and Judy and Di were there.

'Get Jan quick, Judy — Di, take hold farther down. *Quick!*'

'Aa-h' the long shudder of relief when Judy had pulled Jan free!

Jill was scarcely conscious of her own relief in letting go the burning tree. Was Jan — dead? Jan whom she loved — Jan whom she wouldn't tell — wouldn't help — a long while ago — or was

it only five minutes, three minutes ago? Jill didn't know. She only knew that she couldn't *endure* that still white look on Jan's face, and that it seemed an eternity before Judy who was pouring some water between those pale lips looked up and said huskily: 'She's breathing all right now, keep rubbing her, Di; she's all right, do you hear, Jilly? You probably saved her life, the moss broke the pressure, I suppose, but she'd have smothered very soon.'

Jill felt queer; there was a strange roaring in her ears and the woods looked unaccountably dark. She managed to hold on to a friendly branch but made no effort to help Di who was now pouring the rest of the bucket of water on the smouldering birch bark.

'The roots must have been burned right through,' she heard Di say, and then Judy's voice. 'Tell Miss Maxwell we're all O.K., Jilly. The others are coming, they'll be frightened.'

Jill turned obediently, took one step and paused. Curious how the ground faded away like that . . . just when one needed it. A few more steps, with great difficulty, and there was Miss Maxwell running, frightened. Why should she be frightened?

'What's the matter?' gasped Miss Maxwell.

'A tree fell, and Jan was stunned — but we're all right now, Judy says.'

'Jill! Tell me — what's wrong then?'

'Jilly, Jilly! She's burned, Miss Maxwell. Oh, look at her poor arm and knee.' The quick tears were in Gay's eyes as she took hold of Jill's arm and gently lifted a bit of charred bark from the painful burn. 'Oh, Jilly, is it *terribly* sore?'

'Oh, that?' said Jill, looking stupidly at her own hurt. 'That's too bad, but it couldn't — couldn't be helped — I had to hold the tree there.'

. . . . . .

'You were right, Jilly, weren't you, about this being your unlucky day,' said Pop who had come to bring the invalids their good-night glass of milk: she was looking anxiously at the bandages on Jill's arm and leg and at Jan still white under her tan. A terribly unlucky day!

'Oh, I don't know,' said Jill who was stretched out in a camp chair beside Jan's, feeling curiously content and happy.

Pop's expressive face registered great surprise.

'Why-ee,' she began reproachfully. 'You got a D mark for untidiness and were late for the match and forgot the work for the Scroll, and I fell in the water and you were blamed and then you had a tree fall on you and were burned.'

Jill smiled affectionately at the way Pop's voice rose to the extremely unlucky climax of the day's misfortunes. She added, silently, another item to Pop's count — Pop hadn't known about Jan's anger, and her own refusal to accept Jan's wordless request for forgiveness. Jill looked over at Jan who was lying with her eyes closed as if asleep.

Pop stood on one foot and looked perplexed.

'There's the other side too,' said Jill gently. 'I was untidy and lazy and forgetful but I found unselfishness and — and — consideration and helpfulness where I didn't deserve them — that's not an unlucky day.'

Pop's eyes shone. Helpfulness. That meant Pip and her — she must remember the exact word to tell Pip. She said good-night and trotted away to find her twin.

Jill continued her count — there were things as yet undreamed of by Pop in the tale of this day: Could she ever forget Gay's words as Di and Judy dressed the burns with the yellow powder Judy had remembered to put in the First Aid Kit: 'Jill, you're the bravest person I ever knew. How could you hold the tree and watch the fire coming to you?' Or Miss Maxwell's arm around her as they rowed home, or Judy's 'Good work, Jilly!' or the tears in Big Chief's eyes as she held her close

when Miss Maxwell had told the story, and her words, those shining words, 'Well done, Jill! We're proud of you — all of us at Camp Conqueror.'

And Jan!

Jill leaned over to see if Jan were really asleep.

'It's nice out here, isn't it?' said Jan. 'Tired, Jilly?'

Jill shook her head and the look that passed between the two friends alone would have outweighed all of Pop's reckoning. For in that glance that passed from one to another were the imponderables which yet outweigh the careful little reckonings — confidence and trust, and love were there and something noble and strong and enduring — friendship.

Jill was happy.

Oh, no, *not* an unlucky day!

CHAPTER VIII

THE GROWING CIRCLE

THE Ojibways were taking their ease after a strenuous morning's work and a very successful luncheon, and Betsy, who had several times been voted the best cook in the tribe, had added to the laurels placed on her already heated brow by producing at the end of the feast a bottle of raspberry vinegar. The tired warriors lay on a carpet of pine-needles, turning on one elbow at intervals to sip their cool drink luxuriously, and yet carefully, with an eye to making it last as long as possible; carpentering was good fun, they had decided, but very tiring on a hot day, and the roof, where several of them had spent the morning, the hottest place imaginable.

'I'll always look at roofs more respectfully after this,' observed Lorry, glancing proudly at the Log Cabin. 'I wouldn't and couldn't have believed there were so many shingles and so many nails in a roof that size. Did we tell you, Di, that not a drop leaked into the bunks or anywhere, for that matter, in last night's thunder-storm?'

'No, you didn't,' said Di, her eyes twinkling.

'And I must say I'm surprised. . . . No, not about the roof. . . . Of course not. . . . But that you didn't shout the glad news the moment I arrived!'

'Couldn't we have the house-warming the end of the week, Di?' asked Jill eagerly. 'We're almost ready. . . . The extra benches and such could be finished afterwards.'

'How! How!' said the warriors with various degrees of animation.

'Sure we can,' said Di placidly. 'That's why I was late getting down this morning. I went to see Big Chief about it, and she says we are to have an Ojibway house-warming first, that we may camp here all night, say to-morrow, use the bunks for some of us and the rest sleep outside.'

'How! How!' cried the tribe emphatically.

'Big Chief's the *fairest* person I know,' said Pip solemnly. Pip had feared and expected that the counselors or seniors or chiefs would have the honor of sleeping the first night in the little cabin whose every log she loved with a sense of blissful ownership.

'Big Chief is fair to everybody,' agreed Di warmly. 'And we want to be, too; so I'd like to propose that Pop and Pip who have been the most willing, hard-working *helpers* ever since we began to build the cabin should be given a vote of special

thanks. . . . And I think it would be nice if instead of helping at this house-party they should be *in charge* of some part of it.'

'How! How!' cried the Ojibways, so heartily that Pip was quite scarlet and speechless with embarrassment.

Pop, however, said eagerly, 'That's more than being fair, but it's awfully nice for us, thank you, Di. We'd simply love it. Could we get the breakfast all by ourselves? Be the cook and the hostess and everything? And not have anybody tell us what to do?'

There was laughter and applause at this request, and then Di solemnly made them Breakfast Hostesses for the Ojibway house-party.

The twins seemed to be in such perfect accord that Pop was able to speak for Pip as well without consulting her, but she never made a mistake as far as the others could judge, and certainly not this time, for Pip's eyes were even brighter than Pop's as the chief gave them their commission, and she gave very little heed to the discussion of tribal business that followed. Would pancakes be best or dared they try popovers in the tin oven? . . . Bacon was ordinary, still everybody liked it, and it did smell good cooked out of doors.

Pip's menu was almost arranged when she heard

Di say firmly, 'Now wake up, everybody — you've all been half asleep and I heard Jan snore. Yes, I did, cross my heart. This is the last item of business and most important, so ——'

'Excuse me, Di, for interrupting,' said Madge importantly. 'I haven't had a chance yet to speak about the Scroll and perhaps I'd better now.'

'Certainly,' said Di promptly. 'Let's know the worst.'

'I haven't a thing, not a single thing ready for Council Ring,' said Madge solemnly in her gruff, boyish voice. 'I've asked every one.' Her eye swept the recumbent warriors accusingly. 'I ought to know by to-day what is being written even if it isn't finished. And nobody has even begun anything as far as I can find out.'

'Too bad,' said Di so perfunctorily, that Jill almost laughed aloud because it was exactly the way *she* felt. 'I mean it's disgraceful,' continued Di, in her most chieftain-like voice. 'Now buck up, everybody. We can't let down the tribe this way. Last week's Scroll wasn't any too good.'

'How! How!' groaned one or two voices.

'We must think of something,' said Di. 'Jilly, couldn't you write another parody? The last one went splendidly.'

'I asked her,' began Madge reproachfully.

'Yes, I know you did,' said Jill almost rudely. 'But it isn't fair: you ask me every single week. Why can't somebody else worry their brains a bit for the old Scroll?'

Madge looked distressed. Not because of Jill's ill-concealed irritation toward herself, but — 'the old Scroll!' That was almost high treason in Madge's ears.

Jill was already ashamed of her little outburst. She couldn't understand why Madge provoked her so easily, and while Di made further tentative suggestions for Saturday's Scroll, she tried to discover just why she liked Madge least of all the Ojibways: it wasn't her voice, though that was queer like a boy's, husky and rough; nor the solemn way she looked at the world from behind her spectacles; nor because she always remembered everything and was always on time; nor because she was so important. At least Jill hoped none of these were the real reasons, because they were all little things, after all.

Jill looked again at Madge who was busily writing down Di's suggestions. Of one thing she was certain — Madge was not interesting. Big Chief had said last Sunday morning that there was something very interesting about everybody only we weren't always sympathetic enough to discover it. . . . It seemed highly unlikely that Madge . . .

'And you, Jill?' asked Di.

'No — no, I don't suppose I am,' said Jill incoherently.

'Am what?' asked Di, in some exasperation. 'Will you or will you not, help Gay write an account of the house-party for the Scroll? . . . Thanks. . . . If anybody else feels she is going to go to sleep or day-dream I wish she'd retire six paces to the rear and turn three somersaults, for we've got a mighty important item of business to consider. Listen, everybody! The Crees have done the Ojibways the honor of inviting them to present the first play to be given in the New Outdoor Theater which they expect to have ready for occupancy two weeks from Saturday!'

This *was* news!

All the Ojibways talked at once: What a lark! The very first play in the New Theater! Why had *they* been chosen? What *in the world* could they prepare in two weeks' time?

No further need for Di to tell them to wake up. Suggestions for the play poured in: As You Like It; Cinderella Up to Date; The Piper; A Minstrel Show; Peter Pan; Mother Goose; Robin Hood.

Gay, as Jill had noticed, was unusually quiet: she waited until some of the plans had been discussed and objections raised to most of them, and then

said eagerly, 'I believe I know the very thing — not too long for us to learn, lots of action, fairy princess and all the rest, a farce really, but a classic, too. I'll give you three guesses. They did it at the University Theater last winter and I laughed till I cried.'

'Name!' cried several voices.

'"The Rose and the Ring," by Thackeray,' said Gay impressively.

'The Thackeray who wrote "The Newcomes"?' asked Ann eagerly.

'William Thackeray, the same, author of "Vanity Fair," "The Newcomes," etc.,' said Gay. 'He wrote "The Rose and the Ring" as a Christmas pantomime for his children, I think, who were abroad for the holidays, and he illustrated it himself with the quaintest pictures. Big Chief has a copy; I saw it a few days ago on her bookshelf.'

'Why-ee,' said Jill coming to life. 'Judy told me about it: she saw it, too, at Varsity last Christmas: she'll be able to give us all sorts of ideas.'

'What's the story, Gay?' asked Di. 'I never heard of it before, though I ought to be ashamed of myself if Thackeray wrote it.'

'I don't know whether I can remember it all,' said Gay slowly, as she tried to recall the scenes of the play. 'There's a King and a Queen who are

very funny and their daughter, Princess Angelica, who is anything but angelical in features or character, and a poor little Cinderella-maid, Betsinda, who is really a lost princess in disguise, Rosalba, by name; and two princes for the maidens, Bulbo, who is fat and comic, and Giglio, charming and brave and handsome, and a fairy, Blackstick, who mixes up the love stories with the aid of a magic rose and a magic ring that make their owners seem beautiful to all beholders. And, of course, the rose and the ring get lost, and oh, I mustn't forget the Countess Gruffanuff — she's the villain: she's old and ugly and has a gruff voice, and she gets hold of the magic ring, I forget how, and Giglio who sees her wearing it falls in love with her and thinks she's the most beautiful creature in the world (not really, of course, because he loves Betsinda) but Gruffy takes advantage of the magic and gets him to sign a paper saying he'll marry her and almost makes him do it, but the Fairy Blackstick interferes in time. Oh, and there's an execution or at least nearly one — Bulbo almost loses his head. It's lots of fun!'

There was much laughter at this conclusion, and Gay was chaffed about her morbid taste for executions.

'Sounds as if it had possibilities,' said Di at

length. 'It's a bit of luck Big Chief having a copy of the story and Judy having seen it played. Shall we vote now or wait until we've read the story?'

'I move that the chief and Gay and Judy and Jill be a committee to read the story and decide if it's suitable, and choose the cast, no matter which play we have,' said Lorry.

The motion was put to the vote and carried.

'That's that,' said Di contentedly. 'We'll get to work at once, I promise you, and we'll report on the story to-morrow right after breakfast. Meanwhile, is it understood, please, that the fact that Gay and Jill are on the committee isn't to prevent them being given a part if Judy and I agree? Perhaps they'd better not be on that committee.'

'Oh, don't let's change,' said Lorry, getting up and stretching. 'Dee and I are to have a riding-lesson at half past four and it's four now. Let the chief fix it up if everybody wants to be the Princess. Moi, I'm willing to be anything or anybody except ——'

'No fair!' called several voices.

'Right you are,' said Lorry grinning. '"If every little camper were just like she, what sort of camp would this camp be!" Now, O Chief, I've stolen the rebuke from the corner of your mouth. I saw it hanging there.'

Lorry and Dee hurried off for their ride and the others followed more slowly in twos and threes, some by canoe and others along the forest trail, all of them busily discussing the prospects of the first play in the New Theater. Every one admitted that whatever was chosen, must be well done, for it was a great honor which had fallen to the Ojibways, and every one seemed disposed to agree with Di that 'The Rose and the Ring' had possibilities.

Di and her committee worked quickly, for no time could be spared for preliminaries with such short notice: Big Chief applauded heartily the idea of using Thackeray's story, and Judy delighted them all by producing a sketch of the dramatized version which she had brought with her thinking it might come in useful for some evening's entertainment; they spent the evening reading the delightful story and met again next morning to choose the characters.

Jill was thrilled at being on a committee with Judy and Di: never had she felt so important! Di had a list of the characters in the play, and one of the members of the tribe. Every Ojibway was to be given some part or other and, luckily, there were plenty of fierce soldiers, executioners, chamberlains and such, as minor characters. The real problem

before the committee was to fit the right persons to the half-dozen important rôles.

It was very necessary, Judy declared, for the committee to decide upon the main characters before they reported to the meeting of the tribe which was to be held directly after luncheon.

Di agreed that it would be well to know their own minds before the meeting, but added wisely: 'If we decide in haste we'll repent at leisure, for one change in the cast may necessitate several further changes, and that upsets everybody.'

An hour's hard work resulted in a tentative cast of the characters of the play which seemed to offer ground for few objections. To Jill's surprise and delight the other three members of the committee were unanimous in their decision that she would best fit the part of Betsinda, the disguised princess, and Di and Judy were equally certain that Gay must be Giglio. Gay was reluctant to allow her name to stand, but only, as Judy pointed out, because it might look badly to have a leading rôle herself, since she had suggested the play and was a member of the committee.

'I'll take the blame,' said Di serenely. 'Nobody's going to be mean enough to be huffy: have a higher opinion of your fellow Ojibs, Gay.'

'I hope it wasn't Princess Angelica to whom

Lorry was objecting,' said Jill, watching Di write 'Lor' opposite 'Princess Angelica.'

'Lor's a good sport,' said Gay quickly, 'but I don't believe Madge is going to appreciate being chosen to fill the villain's part. The Countess Gruffanuff is certainly a detestable female. Madge, poor dear, has just the voice for the part and though I wouldn't insult her by saying that she looked like Thackeray's picture, she *has* got a long nose, there's no denying that.'

'Madge simply must be Gruffy,' chuckled Jill, who had been surreptitiously peeping into the fat little volume which Big Chief had loaned them. 'This place where she insists on Giglio marrying her because he signed a paper saying he would, is exactly like Madge. If you promise to do anything, she gives you no peace at all until it's done.'

'She's an old dear,' said Di, grinning at some recollection of Madge's pertinacity. 'She'll be ready to do whatever we ask her. Betsy won't mind being Bulbo; she told me she expected that if she had any part it would be a plump one; and Jan will make a good king.'

'I'm glad we've settled on Gee for the Fairy Blackstick,' said Jill happily, 'she's just like that — turning up at odd moments when you don't expect her and putting things right.'

'I wish you'd take Giglio's part, Di,' said Gay earnestly. 'Well, then, some part,' as Di shook her head. 'The King hasn't many lines to learn.'

'I'm not the least bit of use in a play,' said Di candidly. 'I haven't any imagination, and no matter how you tried to make me the King of Paflagonia, and how I tried to make myself fit his rather ignoble part, I'd still be plain Di Harris. No, I'd far better be a soldier along with Pip and Pop, and that will give me more time to look after things behind the scenes. Or, I tell you what, I'll be Count Gruffanuff instead of Dee; he's almost as detestable as Madam his wife, and he's got the shortest part of all. I think I could manage that much if Judy will promise to coach me.'

'Fine!' said Judy. 'That makes the list just right, I think, and I hope the others think so too, for that will save time, and we'll need every moment for discussing costumes and so forth.'

Di might not have the imagination needed to make her a good actress but she had sufficient to enable her to get the other person's point of view. Consequently she made an admirable presiding officer when the tribe met to hear the committee's report. The choice of the cast was fully discussed and, with one or two minor changes, approved and passed; committees were formed to look after

costumes and stage management; everybody was given a job and everybody seemed quite content.

'Di is a splendid chief,' said Jill to herself as she went up to the Wigwoo to get ready for a sailing-lesson. 'She was right about Madge, too . . . Madge didn't seem to mind at all being Countess Gruffanuff. . . . Offered to help Judy type the parts. . . . I wonder if she really wants to be useful . . . or important . . . I don't know. . . . People are *queer*. . . . and awfully mysterious. . . . Sometimes I wonder if I know anything for *sure* about anybody.'

She lingered in the Wigwoo for a few moments hoping that Jan or Gay or Gee would come in so that they might talk over the momentous and exciting doings of the last twenty-four hours. Why-ee, yesterday she hadn't the ghost of a notion that to-day she was to be a princess — and a princess in exile at that! The Princess Rosalba!

Unconsciously Jill gazed appraisingly at her reflection in the tiny mirror.

'That's where short hair is a disadvantage,' she murmured, pushing back her dark curls. 'I'll have to have a wig. Nobody ever heard of a bobbed princess in a fairy tale! 'Twould be a disgrace! Oh, I do wish Jan would come. I haven't had a moment to talk to her about it!'

However, Jan didn't come, and when Jill finally raced down to the little dock where the Swallow lay rocking, her white wings furled, she found, not Miss Dunstan ready for the lesson, but Madge with sunglasses to shield her eyes and her long nose anointed with a liberal protection of cold cream.

'Miss Dunstan is coming in a few minutes,' said Madge precisely. 'She said that as you were late she'd go back and see Docky about another First Aid Class.'

'Sorry,' said Jill, perfunctorily. How like Madge to put her in the wrong at once!

'I was waiting for Jan,' she continued. 'I can't imagine where she has gone.'

'This is her riding day,' said Madge. 'She left before the meeting broke up so as not to keep Miss Mac waiting.'

Of course it was! How had she forgotten? What would it be like to remember everything the way Madge did! Not that she wanted to be like Madge.

Jill took another look at Madge's glistening countenance and decided that not only of all the Camp Conqueror girls did she like Madge least, but that she almost disliked her, and as for there being anything interesting about her . . . it would take Big Chief to discover it. . . .

Jill jumped down into the Swallow and saw that everything was ready to cast off as soon as Miss Dunstan should appear. She didn't want to talk to Madge who would probably begin again about her precious Scroll, but she was so full of excitement and happiness that she must talk to some one.

'It's wonderful luck having Judy for our counselor when she knows all about "The Rose and the Ring," isn't it?' she began. 'It'll make a perfectly splendid play. . . . Di was splendid this morning at choosing the cast. . . . I think everybody fits in beautifully, don't you?'

'Well,' answered Madge slowly, although Jill's question was purely rhetorical, 'perhaps . . . I'm not sure.'

Jill gaped with astonishment. Who did Madge think she was to question the wisdom of the august committee? She half-opened her mouth to say something cutting and then closed it abruptly. Why. . . . Of course! Madge hated being chosen Countess Gruffanuff. . . . What was Di going to say to that! . . . She'd thought Madge too big to feel hurt! And Madge looked doleful, no doubt about it: she'd been crying — that's why she had put on those dark glasses!

This was a most disturbing discovery. Tears!

In a happy place like Camp Conqueror! She and Gay, Jan and Gee, all pleased, delighted with their parts, and poor old Madge miserable about it, crying in secret. . . . Why hadn't she objected in the meeting? . . . Di gave every one a chance to do that. . . . Perhaps she didn't like to seem a 'knocker'. . . . Something would have to be done. . . . Madge looked awfully down!

'Sorry,' said Miss Dunstan's cheerful voice behind them. 'It's your bad example, Jill — and the fact that I forgot to speak to Docky. Madge is going to be cargo. Now, Jill, let me see how much you have remembered.'

Jill hadn't much time to think of Madge during the next quarter of an hour, for a brisk little breeze came whisking and prancing down the lake in such unexpected gusts that the management of tiller and sail claimed the whole of her attention. But the breeze soon dropped and while she put about, and tacked, came up into the wind, and tacked again obedient to Miss Dunstan's suggestions, she was forced willy-nilly to pay heed to a troublesome question which would not be ignored: Madge being what she was, was it quite *fair* to make her the horrid Countess Gruffanuff? . . . Since she already had a long nose and was not, to put it plainly, very attractive to look at, was it

fair to emphasize her length of nose and lack of charm?

The question was unanswered when Jill had triumphantly guided the Swallow home and helped her furl her wings again. Madge, who had been an unusually intelligent 'cargo' and had shifted her weight quickly and always at the right time, thanked Miss Dunstan and Jill earnestly for letting her come and, as soon as they landed, walked hurriedly away as if on some errand of her own.

Miss Dunstan looked after her and then turned to Jill and said quickly, 'What were you going to do now, Jill?'

'I thought I'd run down to the Lodge to find out if Di and Judy were working there, and if they wanted me, and then get Gay and Gee to come and show me the New Theater: the others were to see it while we were sailing.'

'Supposing you go to the theater first,' said Miss Dunstan, 'and take Madge with you. She looks unhappy, doesn't she? I'm afraid ——'

Miss Dunstan was wondering whether to tell Jill any more, but Jill didn't wait for further confidences.

'I'm afraid she has been crying, Dunsey, and I'm awfully sorry. . . . Something will have to be done. . . . I'll hurry after her now, shall I?'

Miss Dunstan nodded, and there was relief in her eyes. Jill was just the person needed.

Away ran Jill, called to Madge to wait for her, caught up to her and reminded her that the others had seen the theater in their absence, and asked her to wait while she found out if Gay and Gee would come too.

Madge cheered up visibly at this proposal, and seemed so grateful at Jill's remembering her that Jill felt ashamed. Why hadn't she been nicer to Madge? She must see Di before supper time about the possibility of a change in the rôles.

Gay and Gee were luckily at home and the four of them went arm in arm to investigate the New Theater.

The Crees had certainly done wonders! A bit of the meadow-land on the other side of the Hall had been chosen because of the fir trees which were already growing on two sides of it and because of the plateau-like elevation at one end which would serve admirably as a stage. This was what the Crees had started with, but they had made many improvements. The Ojibways were loud in their admiration: they found Lou, chief of the Crees, on the ground, and as she led them about and showed how they had planted fifty evergreens, mostly fir and balsam, at the back and sides of the stage,

forming splendid exits and entrances, how they had dug and leveled and added to the plateau until it was all that a stage could be, how they had increased the natural gentle incline of the floor of the amphitheater and had cunningly replaced the daisy-starred sods, Madge was almost as excited as Jill — which is saying a good deal! — and quite lost her look of dejection.

Then Jan came back from her ride and could talk of nothing but how adorable was Mitzi, the little brown mare, and how perfectly beautiful was the trail to the fire tower, and how, coming home, Mitzi had cantered beautifully. And after supper came stunts in the Lodge, since it was a rainy evening, and Gay had thought of such clever ones for the Ojibways to do and was so perfectly ridiculous in the still-life charades, and everybody including Madge was having such a happy time, that Jill entirely forgot about Madge's secret sorrow at being chosen Countess Gruffanuff.

But next morning at breakfast Madge happened to be sitting opposite, and Jill could not help noticing that her face was white and her eyes swollen as if she had been weeping again, and that her whole attitude was melancholy in the extreme. Jill felt a pang of remorse. How could she have

forgotten! It must be a very real trouble to poor old Madge.

This time there was no forgetting. After breakfast, while she hastily made her bed, she explained matters to Jan, who agreed that something must be done, and then hurried off up the trail to the Pagoda where she hoped to find Di.

It was a lovely morning: Jill sniffed luxuriantly at balsam and pine and bracken; a fox-sparrow trilled belated matins from the tall hazel bushes, and a little breeze from the lake shook the leaves into flickering patterns of light and shade. She walked quickly, feeling rather pleased with herself: from deep within there arose the vague thought that it was really extraordinarily nice of her to take this trouble and ask Di to make an exchange of rôles, which was sure to be a nuisance, so that Madge might feel happier. . . . Perhaps *nobody* would want to be Countess Gruffanuff. . . . It certainly wouldn't be so nice as being Princess Rosalba. . . . Supposing Di suggested that she and Madge *exchange* parts! . . . Would she be willing?

Jill stood still at the turn of the trail as if transfixed by this disturbing and unwelcome thought. She was so quiet and looked so intently far down through the trees to the blue lake that a tiny

chipmunk who had 'frozen' into immobility at her approach resumed operations with a hazel nut, deciding, evidently, that the big creature was quite harmless.

Jill continued to turn the thought about and look at it from all sides. Then she shook her head and said '*No!*' so decidedly that the chipmunk dropped his cherished nut and fled in dismay.

No! She would *not* give up being a princess just to please Madge. . . . And imagine Madge a princess!

At this mean thought Jill had the grace to blush. There was no use being conceited and vain, she told herself severely, and she'd better get on to the Pagoda and leave the whole matter to Di.

However, the Pagoda was empty: in exquisite order, Jill could see through the screen door; she remembered with a pang that she had not put away her shoes or the writing materials she had used last night, and that Gee was probably doing it for her at that very moment.

Turning from the door, to her surprise Jill came face to face with Big Chief.

'There's nobody at home, I'm afraid,' she said. 'I wanted to see Di.'

'And I wanted to see you,' said Big Chief. 'Jan told me where you'd gone. Let's sit down on the

door-step a moment: I've got a pebble or a pine-needle in my shoe.'

'It's about Madge,' began Big Chief, bending down to unlace her shoe.

Jill gave a guilty start and the color rushed to her face. Big Chief seemed to know everything, absolutely everything — but surely not that miserable conceited thought she'd had a minute or two ago.

'I've decided to take you into my confidence,' continued Big Chief, straightening up and looking at Jill with a candid, friendly gaze, 'because I happen to know that Madge is very fond of you; she'd be very happy indeed if you were her friend: you're so happy in your own friends, Jill, that probably you haven't noticed that Madge has no special friends. There are several reasons why Madge is so lonely; she is so unhappy that it is hard for her to be friendly; it is just a little more than a year ago that happiness seemed blotted out of her life, for her mother and father were killed then in a motor accident; her uncle brought her here for the last two weeks of camp last summer.'

Miss Moore paused for a moment and cleared her throat; tears were in her eyes. 'I shall never forget Madge's bravery,' she continued. 'Never. I did

not feel at all sure that Camp would be the best place for any one in such deep bereavement, but her uncle was utterly at a loss as to how to comfort this heart-broken niece he scarcely knew, and there was just a chance of Madge answering to a challenge, and I took it. I put it to her that if she came into this happy place it would not be fair to the others to ask them to share her grief, that she must do her utmost during the day to join in the games and expeditions and keep a smiling face, and at night she and I would talk together and comfort each other. She responded magnificently for she's the most unselfish person I know. Her courage and her selflessness will be a shining example to me — always.'

The last few words were said in a low voice as if Jill had almost been forgotten.

There was silence for a few moments. Big Chief was evidently absorbed in some remembrance of other days: she, too, like Madge had suffered deep bereavement. And Jill said nothing for she was unable to speak; her self-complacency was utterly gone, overwhelmed in a tumult of emotions: pity for Madge, a great wave of passionate pity, scorn for herself with her petty thoughts of Madge, her petty vanities and conceit, her inability to see and understand the real Madge. Oh, what could

she do for Madge! She'd do anything, anything at all!

'We are doing what we can,' said Big Chief as if in answer to Jill's silent cry. 'We're trying to keep Madge occupied all day long with pleasant doings and she's answering again, splendidly, but one has only to look at her eyes to know that she is suffering. I saw her go off just now down past the canoe dock: it isn't good for her to be alone: won't you include her in your plans for the day and — try to be friendly but — not too sympathetic, Jill. Think how you'd like people to treat you if you were in her place.'

'I'll do anything, anything in the world, Big Chief,' began Jill earnestly.

'O Jilly! O Jilly!' came in Gay's ringing tones at that moment. 'Di wants you.'

'It's a secret, then, between us,' said Big Chief quickly with the beautiful friendly smile Jill loved. 'Run along now to Di.'

Jill met Gay and got Di's message, and then went on to the Lodge where Judy and Di were already hard at work with papers spread out on the table, and 'The Rose and the Ring' propped up before them.

'Give me five minutes please, Di,' Jill begged, 'I've something *very* important to do first, and then I'll be at your service.'

'Surely,' said Di absently.

Jill was off like a small whirlwind, leaving a curious feeling of emptiness and flatness behind her.

Of course there was only one thing to do.... Madge simply *must* be the Princess Rosalba.... She'd ask her now if she'd change and let her, Jill, be Countess Gruffanuff, and then she'd go back and tell Judy and Di before they made further plans. ... Now, where was Madge?... Poor old Madge ... her father ... her mother!

Madge would have been hard to find if Big Chief had not seen the direction in which she was going: Jill ran along the beach for some distance before she came upon her standing beside a fallen tree looking out far across the lake.

'O Madge!' called Jill impulsively before she had taken thought as to what reason she was to give for the proposed transfer of rôles. A flying leap or two and Jill landed almost breathless beside Madge who had instinctively pulled her sun hat a little lower over her reddened eyes.

'O Madge! Been looking for you everywhere,' gasped Jill. 'Whew! It's hot, isn't it? You know, I believe you're right.... I don't think that list of the cast is perfect after all, and I wanted to see you before Di and Judy go on marking out the

parts. Would you mind being Princess Rosalba, and letting me be Countess Gruffanuff?'

Madge blinked, and then gave this astonishing proposal her serious consideration.

'Of course it would be too ridiculous for me to be the Princess,' she said slowly, 'but if you really want to be Gruffy probably some other exchanges might be made. I didn't know that Judy and Di intended meeting before eleven and I meant to see them before that myself. You see, I don't think I'm really suited to the countess' part. . . . I may look like her and have a gruff voice, but the person who plays that part has to be able to make people laugh. . . . I saw the play last winter too, and I thought she was almost the most important person. . . . And I'd be no good at it. . . . I couldn't be funny no matter how hard I tried. I hated the idea of upsetting their plans so I didn't say anything just at first. . . . Though of course, if they *really* want me to do it I'm quite willing to be the goat.'

Sheer amazement kept Jill speechless. However, she did some quick thinking during those ten seconds. Quite a number of preconceived ideas about Madge had to be readjusted. . . . Madge knew about the play. Madge knew about herself and her limitations, and Madge, it seemed, had much bigger ideas about loyalty to the tribe than

she, Jill, had dreamed of. . . . She was willing to be made a *fool*, if it would help the cause of the Ojibways!

'Madge, you're an absolute brick,' said Jill at length with such obvious sincerity that Madge's eyes shone with pleasure.

'Why don't you want to be the Princess, Jilly?' she asked anxiously. 'But, look here, didn't you say Di was blocking out the parts? Then let's hurry back, we can talk on the way. I'm sure that Di said eleven. . . . I wonder if she forgot?'

Gay was with Judy and Di, the three of them talking very earnestly when Jill and Madge reached the Lodge.

'Want to change,' repeated Judy in tones that betrayed relief to Jill's quick ears. 'That's funny, we were just discussing that part. I believe Gay would be good there, there's more of the clown in her than in you, Madge, and Jan could be the Prince. Di, how about Madge for Hedzoff, and then she could be put in charge of all the soldiers? Pop and Pip and Ann will be so excited they'll hardly know what they are doing; it would be splendid to have some one absolutely dependable in charge there.'

'The very thing,' said Di enthusiastically. 'It would be fine to feel that Madge had time to give an eye to them. I know I'd feel relieved.'

Madge glowed at this sincere praise.

'I'd love to be Hedzoff,' she said promptly. 'I'll get the typewriter oiled and I'll be ready as soon as you want me for copying, Di.'

'Come on, Jilly, get to work,' said Gay. 'Here's a pencil.'

But Jill, too, had something to say.

'Let somebody else be the Princess please, Di,' she said. 'Couldn't I have a smaller part?'

'What now?' said Di, looking her astonishment. 'Is this sort of thing catching?'

'I — I wish it were,' said Jill quickly. 'I mean, I'll do anything you like, Di.'

'Then sit down and let's get to work,' said Di decidedly. 'We all think you'll be the best princess — it's a long part and you can learn quickly. Everybody agreed? The ayes have it.'

That evening as she sat with Jan and Madge beside the big camp-fire Jill had a little space of quiet in which to meditate on the doings of the day. Neither Jan nor Madge appeared to be inclined to talk. She wondered idly what they were thinking of . . . Jan looked contented and sleepy — she'd had another long ride that afternoon — and Madge seemed much happier than she had at breakfast time, much, much happier. . . . What an utterly surprising person Madge was! . . . inter-

esting. . . . She knew Bliss Carman who had written the poem about the Lady's Slipper . . . and had actually *talked* to him and he had autographed one of his books for her . . . Madge loved poetry. . . . She'd promised to lend Jill the 'Oxford Book of English Verse.' . . . It looked perfectly fascinating. . . . Just think what she had missed by not knowing Madge better. . . . Funny, if it were true, what Big Chief said — that *everybody* was interesting. . . . Well, she wouldn't forget in a hurry Madge's 'bigness' about the play . . . Jan wouldn't be as surprised as she had been. . . . Jan expected the best from other people. . . .

Jill set her lips firmly together as she promised herself solemnly to try to do the same, and to be more unselfish like Jan and Madge and — and more thoughtful and orderly like Gee. It was perhaps just as well that all the campers who had been watching the fencing class in the Lodge came swarming down around the fire just then, or Jill's list of good resolutions might have run away with her entirely.

'The merry folk with brown bare knees' crowded about the fire, which was doing credit to the skill of the fire-tenders, and soon there were songs, solos and choruses, and fairy-like music from the tinkling ukuleles, and the popping of corn, and more

songs, and then insistent demands for a story from Big Chief.

Big Chief reminded them that it was late, for they had spent much time popping corn, but there were loud wails of disappointment.

Who ever heard of a camp-fire without a story!

'A little story then, my children,' said Big Chief, 'a little story that many of you know, I think. Yet so great a story that we may well hear it again.'

Then, simply, but with moving power, she told them an ancient Greek tale of an immortal friendship: how one, Damon, asked that he might remain a hostage for his friend Pythias who for a political offense had been condemned to death, and who was very desirous of journeying to his own home to put his affairs in order and to say farewell to his wife and family: how Damon's request was granted on condition that he pay the penalty with his own life if Pythias did not return at the appointed time: how Damon's trust in his friend's good faith remained unshaken, although Pythias, delayed by unforeseen circumstances, did not return until the very last moment of the time agreed upon: and how Dionysius the Tyrant was so impressed by the strength and loyalty of their friendship that he pardoned both men.

Big Chief paused for a moment and looked at the faces all turned toward her in the firelight. Jill's eyes were shining: Jan would have been like Damon. She would have waited and trusted. Oh! How splendid it was to have Jan for one's very *own* friend!

'But the story does not stop there, my children,' said Big Chief, slowly and significantly. 'Dionysius pardoned the two friends on condition that they would admit him to their friendship. The story does not say, but we may be sure, that the little circle which had been strong enough to stand the severest testing, widened to receive a third friend and was strengthened thereby. That is the way with the circles of all true friendship: beware the tiny circle which will not expand: if it grow not, it must break, and if it grow — life will be richer and fuller.'

And from Jill's shining eyes to Big Chief's shining eyes, like the swift flowing of an electric current, there passed a look of understanding, of confirmation: *This was true!*

CHAPTER IX

THE CAMPING TRIP

'Would you like my hatchet, Jan?' asked Jill, 'or my First Aid Kit?'

'Thanks,' said Jan. 'The kit would be fine, but I don't believe I'll need the hatchet. Judy will be sure to have one.'

The two friends were in the Wigwoo packing Jan's knapsack for the Algonquin Park trip which was to start the next day.

'Here are your woolen stockings,' said Jill suddenly. 'I'll mend them now. And here are Gay's pale blue ones that you wore in "The Rose and the Ring." Oh, Jan, wasn't it perfectly splendid and didn't we have a good time?'

'Never laughed so much in my life,' agreed Jan. 'It was funny and pretty too. You looked like a real princess, Jilly, in that scene where you wore the cloak with the ermine on it.'

'That's not a *real* compliment,' laughed Jill. 'If you had only said that I looked like a princess when I was a beggar-maid! Wasn't Gay a marvelous Countess Gruffanuff! By the way, where is Gay?'

'Looking after everything,' answered Jan, her brown eyes twinkling. 'She's afraid Judy or Dunsey will forget something.'

'I wonder why she changed her mind,' continued Jill. 'She was so keen to go with the Seniors.'

'Di told me,' answered Jan, beginning to fill her little tin matchbox. 'She's awfully pleased about it . . . says that when Gay found that we were all Ojibways on this trip and that Dunsey and Judy would be glad to have her because she'd been over most of the ground before and knew the portage, she asked Big Chief if she might be transferred. Very decent of her, I think.'

'I should say so,' agreed Jill absently. 'I'm going to sleep up at the Ark while you're away and we're going to have an all-night trip to the beaver-dam or somewhere.' She hummed a gay tune as she mended the stockings. Perhaps the tune was too ostentatiously gay, for a little frown appeared between Jan's merry eyes, and she looked long and carefully at a pile of handkerchiefs as if the choice of which should have the honor of going camping was a very difficult one indeed. Finally, since Jan was above all things straightforward in her thinking as well as in all her doings, she burst out suddenly:

'Jilly, I'm just sick that you're not going. I

was absolutely certain your name would be on the list.'

'Of course not,' said Jill with suspicious emphasis. 'You know very well I've only had my red cap for about two weeks and besides ——'

'As if that mattered,' retorted Jan indignantly. 'A silly little test like that! If it's a question of whether you'd keep your head in an emergency or not, what about the fire, I'd like to know?'

To Jan's complete astonishment Jill shrank away from the question as if that were something she did not care to answer. She looked positively hurt, thought Jan.

'See here, Jilly,' she began again more gently, 'why won't you ever let me say anything about the fire?'

'Because you, and the others, too, believe I was brave, and — and the more I think about it, the more I know I wasn't,' said Jill miserably. 'Yes, I know' — as Jan made a protesting movement — 'I held the tree, but that was for you. . . . Before that, when I saw the little tongues of flame creeping all around us when we were doing our best to stamp them out I was afraid, horribly afraid and I thought about how awful it would be to be burned. . . . And I was terribly afraid of water. . . . I still am sometimes. . . . I'm afraid oftener than

you know. . . . I held the tree this time, but next time I might be too frightened. . . . I'm *afraid of being afraid*. . . . I guess . . . I guess at bottom I'm really a coward, Jan.'

Jill winced as she said the ugly word.

'Of course you aren't! . . . The idea!' said Jan stoutly, but her frown deepened as she saw that she had made no impression on Jill. Jill wasn't a coward, whatever her fears might be, of that Jan was certain, but . . . it was hard to understand. . . . And harder still to explain. . . . She couldn't go off on this trip and leave Jilly feeling so wretched. . . . She just couldn't.

'There, that's done,' said Jill, rolling up the stockings and tucking them into the knapsack. 'Coming down to folk-dancing?'

'I'll be late,' answered Jan slowly. 'I've got — one or two things to see about.'

She stood staring out of the window at the lake after Jill had gone. What could she do? . . . Why wasn't she cleverer at explaining things? . . . Judy had a wise old head, but Judy had gone to the station to get some supplies, and to-night she'd be fearfully busy. . . . Big Chief was going to see them all after supper. . . . Give them last bits of advice probably. . . . Big Chief didn't pester them with rules and such. . . . But of course on a special oc-

casion like this certain things should be said and Big Chief would know just what. . . . Why-ee, Big Chief would know. . . about Jilly. . . . The very person.

Jan lost no time in further contemplation of the lake. Away she ran down the hill and across the meadow, past the Hall to Big Chief's own wigwam. Big Chief was at home. . . . yes, very busy. . . but plenty of time to spare if Jan needed her.

Jan evidently did need her for she came in and shut the door, and Miss Moore gave her secretary the private signal which meant that she was to find something to do elsewhere.

A very different-looking Jan emerged some time later, and went racing across to the Pagoda at top speed. 'Di!' she called as she neared the cabin.

Lorry appeared at the window.

'What you want, Jan?'

'Be gone for half a minute, Lor, like a kind soul. I've got to speak to Di privately.'

Jan's tones were urgent and Lorry good-naturedly vanished.

The folk-dancing class had been dismissed some time before Jan reappeared at the Lodge. She found Jill lying on the bearskin rug before the fire, her chin cupped in her hands, entirely absorbed, as

was her way, in the book she was reading. Jan sat down beside her and spread out the map of Algonquin Park around which interest had centered during the past week.

'Jan, you must read this,' said Jill, closing her book and gazing dreamily into the fire.

'What is it? A story?' asked Jan, who was hunting in her pockets for a pencil.

'It's history; Parkman's "Pioneers of France in the New World" — just as interesting as any story,' answered Jill enthusiastically. 'It's all about Champlain's journeys, three hundred years ago — down the New England coast, and into Lake Champlain — only it wasn't called after him then — and up the Saint Lawrence and the Ottawa River and across to Lake Huron. Imagine discovering such a huge lake! . . . Wouldn't it be *thrilling* to be an explorer!'

'Absolutely,' agreed Jan, who had found her pencil and was now bent over the big map. 'I expect we'll have a taste of it ourselves on this trip. . . . How did Champlain get across to Lake Huron, Jilly? . . . It ought to be on this map.'

'He went up the Ottawa as far as he could,' began Jill, her eyes following Jan's pencil. 'Why! It's not far away from here! Look, Jan! . . . Here's Lake Nipissing — and the French River!'

'He must have had a lot of portages,' said Jan, tracing the course. 'Babs has been up there, and she says there are any number of waterfalls and rapids. . . . What a lot of lakes and rivers . . . hundreds of 'em. . . . Here's the boundary of Algonquin Park, and there is Big Deer Lake and Doe Lake where we're going to camp the second day. Judy says there's another lake up here, though it isn't marked. Di and I are going to try to find it and add it to the map.'

'Then you'll be real explorers. How wonderful! Jan, do try to remember every single thing so you can tell me.'

Jill wasn't envious of Jan's good fortune but the last words were a bit wistful, and this upset Jan's plans entirely. She had meant to be tactful, to lead up to the subject by degrees, to try if possible to discuss the question of fear and cowardice in a very natural fashion, for this had been Miss Moore's suggestion. But it wasn't Jan's way. If Jilly were grieving over the fact that she couldn't go on the trip, at least she could be spared the wretchedness of thinking herself a coward.

'Jilly,' she said abruptly, 'I was speaking to Big Chief about — several things — this afternoon, and we began to talk about courage, and fear, and cowardice. She said a lot of interesting things.

I wish you had heard her. She said only reckless, silly people are never afraid, that we all fear certain things, and if we have imagination we fear them more, because we see the consequences of them. Like fire. It would be silly, she said, not to be afraid of fire, and I guess you have imagination — you know you *have*, Jilly — because you could see what would happen if the fire got going hard, and I guess it would be like that about the deep water too — you'd see yourself going down, *but*' — Jan's tones were triumphant — 'it's only the person who *gives in* to his fears who's a coward; the one who stands firm and keep his head, is brave, and if he does it, even when it may be hard because he knows he ought to, he's *courageous* . . . he *conquers* his fears. . . . And I think you've got courage and so does Big Chief.'

This was a long speech for Jan and she was glad to get it over.

Jill's face shone with a sudden light and she seized Jan's arm and shook it. 'Jan, are you in earnest? Well, then, say it over again.'

Jan had threshed the matter out pretty thoroughly with Big Chief and was quite certain: Jill was to get rid at once of that tormenting fear that she might in some emergency play a coward's part.

And at last Jill was convinced.

'Jan, I'm so happy,' she said earnestly, 'I can't tell you *how* happy. I don't care a bit about the trip now — not the tiniest bit. I'll go with the infants and we'll have as good a time as you will: Pop's simply crazy about it.'

Jan agreed cheerfully: she, too, seemed extremely happy. She grinned broadly when Miss Moore announced at supper time that she wished to see the campers going on the Algonquin Park trip in the Wigwam in a few minutes' time, and smiled still more broadly when Miss Moore added that she'd like to see Jill Grier before the others came.

Jill felt a sudden wild thrill of hope which she sternly suppressed. But what was the matter with Jan?

'Miss Dunstan tells me that you have passed the first swimming tests creditably, and that you expect soon to be able to take the second ones,' said Miss Moore a little later.

'Yes, Miss Moore,' said Jill, looking rather woebegone. Was Big Chief going to rub it in that she might have worked a little harder?

'The tests, after all, are not an end in themselves,' continued Miss Moore calmly. 'They are only a means whereby we try to find out which

campers can be trusted safely to use the boats. Jan assures me that you are quite accustomed to handling a canoe, you have shown Miss Dunstan that you can swim and keep yourself afloat for some time, and you have demonstrated in no uncertain way that you have courage and can keep your wits about you in a time of danger. We seldom send out on these long trips campers as young as you and Jan, but Jan has had a great deal of experience, and she and Di have promised to be sponsors for you if you would like to go tomorrow.'

'Oh, Big Chief! Do you really mean it! Oh! I didn't know any one *could* be so happy!'

Miss Moore smiled sympathetically at a suddenly radiant Jill. 'Yes, I am sure I can trust you, Jill, and I am very glad that you should go, for I believe that you are ready now to benefit from just such an experience. You'll know what I mean when you return. I hope you'll come and tell me. Meantime, remember these trips are testing times: don't get excited and forget the instructions I'm going to give to all of you. And your leaders must be obeyed implicitly. Tell the others, please, they may come in now.'

In came Miss Dunstan and Judy, with Gee and Gay, and the rest of the party, and last of all, Jan

and Di, looking like the successful conspirators that they were.

It was hard to keep one's mind on warnings about two campers always keeping together and never going into the water without the counselors being there and such-like ordinary things when happiness was bubbling and burbling inside of one. But of course after a shining look at Jan, it had to be done, for Big Chief had some very important things to say: that they carried with them the reputation of the camp to which they belonged and if they were reckless, foolishly daring unnecessary dangers — which was not bravery — (here Jan flashed a look of triumph at Jill) they risked bringing harm not only upon themselves but upon the whole camp.

And it was hard for Jill to go to bed when she wanted to shout and sing for joy, but go she must for packing had to be done early before breakfast — she must remember her hatchet.

The famous hatchet was not forgotten next morning, but several other more necessary articles would surely have been left behind, if Jan and Gee had not taken charge of Jill's outfit, Jill herself being much too excited to remember such prosaic things as an extra pair of stockings and a warm sweater coat.

What a send-off the camp gave them! The whole camp, even cook and her girls, and Dan and Nicky, came down to the dock to give advice as to how best to stow away dunnage bags and knapsacks and girls. Everybody talked at once, and everybody seemed very happy, but those going on the trip happiest of all. They wore their oldest clothes and merriest smiles and looked as if they would not willingly change places with any one in the whole world. Good-byes were said — any number of times. But it was all part of the excitement and Jill loved it. She kissed the twins for the third time and promised them a picture of a deer or a moose, said good-bye again to any one who was within sound of her voice, and then with a great shouting of 'Good luck to you!' and 'See you soon!' they were off.

A couple of hours' steady paddling brought them to the head of Lac du Conquérant and then they ascended Bass River, a placid little stream, and entered Bass Lake where they disembarked for luncheon.

Miss Dunstan named the cooks and fire-tenders and dish-washers for the day and the meal was soon prepared.

Jill was almost too excited to eat. She was actually in Algonquin Park at last! Judy had as-

sured her that Bass Lake was on the boundary. Any minute now she might see some of the wild creatures who were protected by law in this great forest reserve!

They paddled along the south shore of the lake during the early afternoon and Jill continued to look eagerly for signs of deer or moose, bear or lynx, and as she saw nothing of especial interest, she was conscious of a growing feeling of flatness and anti-climax. There weren't even any birds: the only one they had seen all afternoon had been a solitary kingfisher swooping down for the fish his keen eyes had noted below the surface of the water. Only that and nothing more. No, Jan had seen two rabbits. But one didn't journey into the wilderness to see kingfishers and rabbits!

Finally Jill confided in Judy, and Judy as usual was consoling: They were not a day's journey from Camp yet: wait until they reached the Narrows and Jill would see! . . .

There were exclamations of delight from the other campers as well as from Jill, when in the late afternoon the little fleet of canoes entered the narrow channel which connected Bass with Big Deer Lake where they were to camp for the night.

Just now the current was scarcely visible, but spring and autumn floods would surely bring a

great rushing of waters between these high rocky walls. The campers loitered about in their canoes enjoying the cool shadows, so restful after the dance of sunlight on blue waters, and admiring the beauty of the great masses of rose-red granite, broken here and there by a stratum of tawny-colored quartz formation, and adorned with patches of lichens and bright moss, and the sturdy pine trees which grew, seemingly, out of the very rock itself.

Presently Miss Dunstan called her little flotilla together and led the way into Big Deer Lake and on toward the point of land where she had camped the previous summer.

Jill felt a thrill of excitement as she and Jan paddled along beside the high shore of the lake. This was exploring at last! The forest crowded right down to the water, even into the water, for fallen trees sprawled their length out into the lake; a forest so dense and thick that it looked as if nothing but the wild beasts who dwelt in it could find a way into its cool depths: the lake was perfectly still, its mirror-like surface broken here and there by a rocky island which lay reflected with magical perfection.

Had any one ever been here before?

Jill doubted it: they were the first, be sure of it,

to find — but no, how horrid to remember — Dunsey had been here . . . still . . . it was thrilling.

There was a great calling of 'Ojib — Ojib — Ojibway!' as the canoes were beached, and a solitary crow perched on a tall pine tree apparently did not like the sound of their musical call, for he cawed indignantly and flew about his domain telling all of its inhabitants what he thought of these rude intruders. However, the campers paid no attention to him but unpacked their dunnage and made preparations for supper and for the night's camping-out in the most efficient, business-like fashion.

Every one had her own share of the work, but although Gay was supposed to be making beds with Jill and Gee she seemed to be here, there, and everywhere, telling Madge where would be the best place to build the camp-fire, and Betsy where they had made a splendid little fireplace last summer, and Jan how best to place the canoes for a shelter in case of rain.

Finally she left the bedmakers altogether while she took from Di and tied up on the branch of a big oak tree the string of four small bass which was all that she and Di had caught that afternoon in their hour's patient fishing after luncheon.

There was no doubt about it, Gay loved to

manage things, and enjoyed exceedingly this opportunity of telling everybody just what to do. The others were quite aware of this little weakness and were already addressing her as 'Cap'n Gay,' which she didn't object to in the very least.

Jill and Gee agreed that Miss Dunstan had made a good choice for the night's camp: the ground was fairly level, free of underbrush, and covered with a soft, thick carpet of pine-needles which made unnecessary the picking of balsam beds; overhead the pine branches would sing them a lullaby, and, incidentally, keep off any passing showers.

Jill hummed a little tune as she helped Gee spread ground-sheets and blankets, and when she was not singing she was chattering: Did Gee know that she and Gay were going to get up early in the morning and catch some more fish so there'd be enough for breakfast? . . . Had Gee seen Betsy's camera? . . . Did Gee think honestly that they'd hear wolves howl to-night? . . . Did Gee think it would be fair if she and Jan had the bed nearest the water right at the point, she'd simply love to be able to sit up in the night and see the stars overhead and the water gleaming through the branches?

Gee thought it would be fair, but doubted whether Jan would love having Jill sit up in the middle of the night to look at the stars.

At last everything was shipshape for the night, and a happy lot of campers sat themselves down to the supper whose tantalizing odors they had been sniffing hungrily for some time.

Conversation during the first half of the meal was largely concerned with such practical matters as whether Betsy had been strictly fair in her division of the bacon, and whether it wouldn't have been better to have made two johnny cakes instead of one.

But by and by every one felt a deep inward satisfaction and a strong disinclination to rise, which last had to be speedily overcome since the sunset was rapidly fading and dishes must be washed and foodstuffs stored for the night. With the delights of a camp-fire before them, however, Jan and Lorry made short work of the dishes, and Gay not only gave advice as to safeguarding the food, but herself put the butter jar in the little pool she had used last year, and hung the bacon bag on the oak tree beside her string of bass. She adjusted the position of the precious fish several times.

'What's the idea?' asked Betsy, watching Gay tying the string as far down the slender branch as she could put it.

'The idea, to put it briefly, is to have a good

breakfast to-morrow morning,' said Gay, stepping back to survey her work. 'There, I don't believe even a wildcat or a lynx could get at those now.'

'A lynx?' said Betsy her eyes rounding with astonishment. 'I thought they were all dead long ago.'

'Sure to be plenty of 'em in the Park,' said Gay patronizingly. 'And is there anything a cat, big or little — likes better than fish? Oh, goody! They're lighting the fire!'

'Everybody ready for bed first,' called Miss Dunstan. 'Bring a blanket with you, and your flashlight.'

'I wonder what they're doing in Camp,' said Jill a few minutes later, breaking that first silence which always descends on the true lovers of campfires as they watch the leaping flames.

'Story-telling,' said Di promptly. 'Ghost stories probably. Big Chief always lets us have what we like best when big parties are away.'

'You promised us one, Dunsey,' Lorry reminded her.

'Ghost story by Dunsey!' shouted the campers approvingly.

But Miss Dunstan shook her head.

'I couldn't sleep if I did,' she said frankly, 'and

I want a good, long, dreamless sleep to-night if we're to explore Beaver Lake to-morrow.'

'Story, not-a-ghost story!' persisted the campers.

'A Charles G. D. Roberts one, please,' coaxed Jill. 'We've got a book, and this would be exactly the time and the place.' And without waiting for an answer she was off to fetch 'Kindred of the Wild.'

Gay began to sing a nonsense version of Mother Goose rhymes, one of the most popular songs at Conqueror that year:

'Old King Cole
Was a merry old soul,
A merry old soul was he,
He called for his pipe
And he called for his bowl —'

'And threw them out the window!
The window, the window,
And threw them out the window!
He called for his pipe
And he called for his bowl
And threw them out the window!'

came the refrain sung heartily by every one.

Then Gee sitting next to Gay took up the tale, and Old Mother Hubbard threw her dog out the window, and by the time Jill was back the old woman who lived in a shoe had thrown all her children out the window, and everybody was feel-

ing very happy and contented and quite ready for a story.

'Which one would you like?' asked Miss Dunstan, turning over the pages.

'Not "The Watchers of the Camp-fire," please,' begged Betsy, looking in dismay at the picture of a panther crouching in the snow watching a hunter by his camp-fire.

'I love the one about the great eagle, "Lord of the Air,"' said Jill eagerly. 'But we read that one at tribal meeting, didn't we?'

'Here's one you'll like, Bet,' said Gay teasingly. 'It's about a dear little lynx, "The Haunter of the Pine Glooms." Look at him, isn't he a pet?'

Betsy shuddered and turned the pages quickly to hide the wicked, grinning face.

'Let's have the one about the moose, — part of it, anyway,' coaxed Jill. 'They're all splendid, but that's the best and not spooky.'

'The picture is,' said Gay, showing the big moose trampling a bear to death. 'As spooky as you make 'em, I should say. However, we'll take your word for it. Pass the candy, Di, don't be piggy.'

Madge, who never forgot any duty once assigned to her, poked up the fire so that Miss Dunstan could see to read, and the campers prepared to enjoy themselves.

And they were not disappointed. Miss Dunstan declared the story was too long, but they coaxed her, and fed her candy at intervals, while Judy took her turn, until the little drama of the King of the Mamozekel was played to its triumphant close.

The hearty 'How! How!' of applause frightened the old crow who scolded loudly from his high perch, and Miss Dunstan seized the opportunity to point a moral.

'He's perfectly right,' she declared jumping up. '*He* knows that forest folk ought to be in bed long before this. Good-night, everybody.'

There were protestations a-plenty at this prompt dismissal but Miss Dunstan laughingly refused to listen, and the fire was damped and good-nights said without delay.

Most of the campers were quite ready to go to sleep, although they didn't want to confess it, but Jill couldn't bear to close her eyes just yet. She and Jan tucked themselves into their blankets as snugly as they could.

'Aren't you glad we've got this place?' whispered Jill after a few minutes of silence.

'Seems comfy,' said Jan drowsily.

'Oh, Jan, do open your eyes and look. The lake's as still as if it weren't even breathing and

the sky isn't black, it's a lovely deep, velvety blue, and the stars are reflected in the water just like little moons!'

Jill's voice was so urgent that Jan raised herself on one elbow to get a view of the lake.

'Yes, it's pretty,' she began.

'Pretty!' said Jill scornfully.

'Sh-sh,' hissed several near-by campers who were evidently, like Jan, intent upon sleep.

Thus admonished, Jill curled up under the blankets once more and looked up at the twinkling stars.

Oh, how happy she was! For ever so long she had wanted to do just this very thing and it was lovelier even than she had thought. But then the whole summer was better than she had dreamed it could be. Supposing she had never come to Camp Conqueror!

A faint, far-away cry floated through the still night.

Was it an owl, or a loon, or a far, far-away wolf? Or a lynx, 'A Haunter of the Pine Gloom'? It might be anything.

Jill shivered with delight. It might be *anything!*

Gay had said that was one of the wonderful things about going on a long trip like this: anything might happen. . . . How perfectly beautiful the

sky was . . . and all the twinkling stars. . . . Funny, to think how far away they were. . . . But they didn't seem nearly so far away since Big Chief had talked about them that Sunday evening around the camp-fire. . . . What was it she had said? . . . Oh, yes, that the North Star was a *friendly* star because sailors and lost people could be sure of it always. . . . Strange, that that was true about stars as well as about people. . . . Probably there were other friendly stars. . . . Perhaps they were all friendly. . . . Big Chief seemed to think so.

Jill raised herself cautiously so as not to disturb Jan and had another long look at the velvety dark water, splashed here and there with glittering reflections, then closed her eyes resolutely and was soon in a deep sleep.

She was not, however, to enjoy the dreamless slumber that Miss Dunstan desired: the tall, shadowy forms of the deer she had been looking for all day, and the moose of the story read at the camp-fire, haunted her dreams; closer they seemed to come, and closer still, until Jill cuddled down under her blanket to hide herself from their bright eyes: she could hear more of them crashing about under the trees: they would trample every one under foot. She must warn them!

'Wake up. Jan, wake up!'

Still asleep, she shook Jan awake, and then with a great start she, herself, was wide awake. What was the matter? Dreaming? She hadn't been only dreaming surely! There *was* a noise! Was it a lynx or a moose? Moose were the ones that trampled! That was Gay's voice — oh, why hadn't she wakened earlier and given the alarm!

'The brute! The brute!' cried Gay indignantly.

There were sounds of a scuffle and several people talking at once; then Miss Dunstan's voice plainly anxious.

'Tell me at once what the matter is, Gay. Be quiet, girls.'

Gay was heard in loud lamentations: 'He's got my fish — the beast! Somebody bring a light! Catch him, he's got my sweater! Quick!'

There was a moment's fumbling for flashlights which ought to have been at hand and were not; Jill fell over some one else's bed and was tangled in a muddle of arms and legs and blankets. Miss Dunstan, however, kept her head *and* her flashlight, and a sudden burst of laughter followed the ray of light she focused on the scene of the tumult: a big porcupine, his head wrapped in a green sweater coat, one paw helplessly entangled in a sleeve, was doing his best to escape from these noisy foes.

'Oh, oh!' cried Gay, pouncing on the remains of what had once been a string of bass. 'Look what he's — quick, catch him!'

Di caught the other sleeve of the sweater just in time, and the porcupine, with a great rattling of his tail quills, made off into the bushes uttering querulous little grunts which seemed to express admirably his dissatisfaction with things in general, and girls and their extraordinary ways in particular.

'He wasn't making a noise like that when I woke up,' said Gay looking puzzled. 'Sounded more like a snarling. I thought perhaps it was a wildcat or a lynx or something like that after my fish, so I rushed at him with a stick and smacked him hard, and then I heard the quills rattling and knew it was a porcupine. I guess the stick wasn't big enough for he certainly didn't drop dead the way Dan said he would.'

'I expect something else was after the fish,' said Judy, who had been prowling about with her flashlight. 'There's a wet trail up from the water, probably a mink who ——'

'Oh, Gay!' came in agonized tones from Jill. 'Why didn't you tell us? She's got three, no, four quills stuck in her ankle. Don't they hurt terribly, Gay?'

'Not terribly — yet,' said Gay calmly. 'Jerk

'em out please, Dunsey, before I begin to think about it.'

Miss Dunstan asked for the First Aid Kit and knelt down to examine Gay's foot.

'Four of them,' she said, almost indignantly. 'You're hopeless, Gay. To jump out of bed after what you thought was a lynx, with no shoes on and only a bit of a stick as a weapon! You almost deserve these — but not quite — I'm afraid it will hurt.'

Three of the barbed spines had merely caught in the skin and came out easily, but one was more deeply imbedded and required skillful manipulation.

Gay winced as Miss Dunstan finally jerked it free and applied iodine to the wound, but the pain was more than compensated for by the admiration for her bravery which she could hear in the comments of the campers as they went off to bed again.

As for Jill, she looked with wonder at Gay standing so quietly in the little circle of light. There were still on this earth, it seemed, brave heroes like the knights of old ready to do instant combat with unknown foes. Gay was surely one of them. Jill forgot all Jan's careful explanations about recklessness and true courage, and Gay in her eyes seemed a shining symbol of that splendid bravery she longed and sighed to possess.

CHAPTER X

THE DOERS

In spite of their broken night the Ojibways were astir early next morning. It was much too lovely a day to waste it in sleeping, they agreed, as they went down to the little beach for their dip. How deliciously fresh and clean everything smelt! White-throats and chickadees were singing matins, and a gentle breeze ruffled the blue lake and shook the perfume from balsam and spruce trees; across the lake the sun yellowed the tree-tops in a blaze of light but in the shade of the pines it was still cool and shady.

No one seemed to want to stay long in the water — it was unanimously voted 'absolutely freezing' — but all agreed that they felt ready for anything after the invigorating plunge and quick rub, and judging by the way bacon and pancakes disappeared, they were at least ready for breakfast.

Plans for the day's fun were discussed with great zest: Gay and Jill and Jan were very keen to find the little lake which Babs had heard was at the head of a small river and had marked tentatively on the map, and Lorry and Madge were just

as determined that what they wanted to do was to get right up Beaver River to Beaver Lake. Finally, it was decided to pack luncheons for two parties, three canoes sticking to the original plan and following Beaver River, and the others, with Judith as leader, making a bid for fame by discovering Lost Lake and putting it on the map.

The Ojibway call was given once more as a good-bye to the disgruntled crow and then the little fleet moved off in single file singing as they went:

'Alouette, gentille Alouette
Alouette, je te plumerai.'

And as long as the canoes kept close enough together they stripped the poor little lark of head and beak, and nose and neck with great heartiness and vigor.

Miss Dunstan had hoped to find Sandy Mack, one of the park rangers, at the portage into Doe Lake to help them over with the canoes, for Big Chief, who was an old friend of his, had written to say that they expected to reach this point on such and such a day. For long difficult portages, arrangements for help were made in good time, but this was a short, easy trail, so Big Chief had not made sure that Sandy Mack would be there.

The girls called eagerly as they neared the little

falls but there was no sound or sign of Sandy, so they pulled up the canoes, and after a little rest and time to enjoy the rushing water they set themselves to the task of transporting the canoes with great cheerfulness. Judy examined the trail and reported that it was quite broad, so they carried the canoes 'lazy-man' fashion, on a rack formed of their paddles, four or six girls to each canoe.

The trail was shaded by tall maples and basswood trees; and although the campers had laughed and chatted and sung on the water, here in the forest they were noticeably quiet. They peered under the branches of the trees hoping they might catch a glimpse of some shy deer or moose taking a morning nap, but to their disappointment they saw no sign of any wild thing.

After the canoes were all safely over there was still the dunnage to carry, and one or two campers were heard declaring that they'd bring even less luggage next time.

Jill helped Judy and Di gather up the last things and then followed them slowly along the trail, a blanket slung over her shoulder, the water pail in one hand and two blackened frying pans in the other: her bare brown knees were scratched, her disreputable-looking knickers and middy were rumpled, and on one of her cheeks, still hot from

the strenuous exercise of canoe-carrying, was a black smudge which could probably be traced to the frying pan.

But Jill felt herself a princess or at least a 'ladye of high degree' in some old-world romance: she loved the strange unbroken silence; she felt as she had the night before that anything might happen in such a place of mystery and wonder; down such vistas through the dark forest, knights in shining armor might come riding on prancing steeds ready for some deed of gallantry and daring; around the next turn in the path under that great oak, Robin Hood and his merry men might be seated at a banquet of freshly roasted venison talking over the joys of the hunt, or any moment she might meet Samuel de Champlain in silken doublet and hose, velvet coat and plumed hat, with his band of Indians carrying canoes and baggage.

So she looked in astonishment at Gay who announced firmly as she helped stow away the dunnage bags:

'I'm glad to goodness we're over the portage at last: now I hope things won't be so uninteresting. Let's have an adventure! We ought to *do* something now that we're in Do(e) Lake. Let's be Doers!'

'Just as you say,' answered Judy cheerfully,

wishing within herself that she could transfer to canvas the two friends as they stood ready to embark in their red canoe; Gay's dimpling, ready smile, her careless, debonair grace and merry blue eyes, and Jill's dark curls, her elfin-like little face, and shining hazel eyes big with wonder and dreams.

'I want to see a herd of deer swimming across the lake just in front of the canoe,' declared Gay. 'There is to be a buck with noble, far-spreading antlers and a gentle doe with her pretty fawn. Please see to it, Judy. And you might make sure that they are in the proper light to have their pictures taken. Phil wagered I couldn't get a snap, said deer were far too wary and that I'd make too much noise. Of course he managed to get one, but that's a different story. I warn you, Judy, I just can't go home without a picture.'

'Madame, your wish is my law. A deer, a herd of deer, you shall have, an it please you — Lorry, you paddle bow here with Gay, will you? Jill's so much lighter she'd better come with me. Jilly, what do *you* want to make you perfectly happy? A cold drink, I should imagine.'

'Or another smudge on your cheek,' said Di teasingly.

'Or your hat,' said Jan practically. 'Where *is* your hat, Jilly?'

'I'm almost perfectly happy now,' said Jill, beaming contentedly at these good fellow-Ojibways. 'And I'll be absolutely and perfectly when we go exploring and find Lost Lake. The thing I'd like the very best would be to go off by myself — follow one of those trails and ——'

'S — Sh! Don't ever say it,' begged Judy. 'Dunsey, come and scold this bad young thing: she wants to go off by her lone.'

'I shan't scold her,' said Miss Dunstan who had just joined the little group. 'I know she'll keep her promise and not be out of sight *ever*, but I'll tell her to-night at the camp-fire about my brother who was lost in Temagami and wandered for a whole day, and came back to the same spot, and then she'll never want to do such a thing again. Everybody ready? Then lead on, Judy. Suppose we keep together until you reach the mouth of Lost River. Madge says that a party two years ago made a cache on one of the islands near there. How would you like to try to find it and camp there to-night?'

'How! How!' said the Ojibways with one accord.

'Whatever do you suppose is in the cache, Judy?' asked Jill. 'And have we to leave it there, or will finders be keepers? Won't it be exciting!

Do let's get down from Lost Lake before Dunsey's party and see if we can find it first — or perhaps that wouldn't be fair.'

Jill felt herself very lucky indeed to be in the leading canoe; she kept a sharp look-out for deer. After all, this was Doe Lake where Dan had assured her that he had often seen whole herds of the beautiful wild things. True it had been in the evening, and not this time of year either; but these were mere details to Jill's quick fancy. So intent was she on watching the wooded banks for any branching antlers or leaping fawn that she missed seeing the giant pine tree with blasted top and stout lower branches which stood out like a landmark on the steep northern shore of the lake.

'Looks just like the tree Roberts described in that story,' said Judy. 'Oh, *Jilly*, look!'

Jill twisted about and followed Judy's pointing paddle. From a jutting branch which probably served him as a watch-tower, a great bird was swinging out over the lake, and as the campers watched him and noted with quickened breath his white head and tail feathers, he mounted in slow spirals up, up, far into the blue, until he seemed a mere speck.

'A bald-headed eagle!' gloated Gay. 'Did you see the white head, everybody? Weren't his wings

enormous! If only I could have got a picture of him! Phil would die of envy!'

They paddled on steadily along the shore until the great tree was far behind. Jill was humming 'Dear little lake of sapphire blue' and thinking what fun it would be to be an eagle and be lord of the air like the one in Roberts's story, when, suddenly, there before her, was the sight she had been watching for so eagerly: a deer with his family, swimming a channel between island and mainland just ahead of them. The graceful creatures were gone so swiftly that Jill might have wondered if it were a dream had she not heard Judy's quick 'Look ahead!'

Gay's wails were loud, and Jill was truly sorry for her disappointment. She called to Jan who said she, also, had had a glimpse of them, and she hugged to herself the happy knowledge that in one day she'd seen an eagle and a deer.

It was almost noon when the six canoes reached the marshy, weedy part of the north shore which Jan thought answered to Babs's description of the place where they would find Lost River: a little farther east was a group of rocky islands, any one of which might be the 'lucky' one which contained the cache, and it was agreed that they should plan to meet as near five o'clock as possible on the near-

est of the islands. Then with a waving of paddles Miss Dunstan and her five explorers swung on up the Lake to Beaver River, and Judy and Jill led the way into the reeds.

Some time elapsed before Jan, waving her paddle, shouted, 'Here she is! As nice a little river as ever I did see!'

Judy and Jill had gone past the mouth of the stream without noticing it, intent on some white water-lilies which lay on the water like great golden-hearted roses, but they left their find now, promising each other they would pluck some on their return, and followed Jan and Gay who were entering the unknown river.

Lost River, even to its proud discoverers, did not look particularly attractive, for its banks were flat and marshy, not nearly so beautiful as the high, thickly wooded shores of the lake, and the party had some difficulty in finding a suitable place where they might have luncheon. A bit of gravelly shore promised a safe landing-place for the canoes and sufficient dry ground where they could build a fire and spread out their provisions. However, after they had landed and put the beans in the pot to heat, they were pestered by small August mosquitoes and big deer flies. If they made a smudge to make their enemies uncomfortable,

they afflicted themselves also, so they decided to eat lukewarm beans and finish their fruit in the canoes away from shore.

After this unpromising beginning, the little river revealed itself as of quite a charming and interesting character.

'Just exactly the sort of river to explore,' Jill agreed with Jan as the three canoes loitered in the shade of a huge tree on the bank. 'We've made about thirty turns already. I haven't a ghost of an idea what direction we're heading for now, have you?'

'Well,' began Jan, squinting at the sun, 'it's about half-past one, and the sun . . .'

'Don't, Jan,' said Jill reproachfully. 'It's much nicer not knowing. Oh, dear, just look at those logs!'

The six explorers surveyed the logs with some dismay, for the way upstream seemed almost entirely blocked by a great multitude of logs which the lumbermen, apparently, had abandoned in their efforts to get them down to the lake.

Di and Gee and Judy, even Jill, would have been willing at times during the next half-hour of pushing and prodding the heavy slippery logs aside, to give up the attempt to find the lake and content themselves with being able to add Lost River to

the big map which hung in the Lodge. But Jan and Gay revived the faint hearts by glowing accounts of the honor which would descend upon the tribe of the Ojibways, when their Scroll announcing the discovery of a river *and* a lake was read in full Council Ring.

At last by dint of much patient pushing and a short portage the three canoes were past the barrier, and without any more loitering or lingering in shady places they forged ahead. The scenery was much more beautiful in these upper reaches of the river: the banks were thickly wooded again, with here and there a flaming maple standing out in glowing contrast to the vivid greens.

Lost River might not be very wide but it was much longer than Judy had expected, and she was reluctantly making up her mind that they would have to turn back when Jan and Gay shouted: 'The Lost is found!' They could see the little lake ahead but it was still some distance away, and when they finally emerged on its shining blue surface they had to rest a while and congratulate themselves, and Gay must take a picture of the others, and then rig up her camera with a string one end of which was tied to the shutter and the other to her foot, so that they might all be in the 'Picture of Explorers Taken after Finding Lost

Lake.' Then Jan and Jill had to have 'just two minutes' to investigate what appeared to be a genuine runway for deer, so that altogether Judy was very much disturbed by the lateness of the hour when they finally started on the return journey and implored every one to paddle as quickly as possible, so that they might not be late and alarm Miss Dunstan unnecessarily.

The explorers responded promptly and heartily to this request: Judy had been a brick, they declared, and they'd had a splendid time, and now she'd see how fast they could go when they tried.

They made good time coming downstream, but the logs were as inert and heavy and troublesome as they had been on the up journey, and the sun instead of painting the sky with a lingering afterglow which would have aided materially the illusion that it was 'not so late after all,' 'dropped like a ruby' behind a bank of clouds. Fortunately they were facing southwest, or Judy would have blamed herself even more sharply than she did, but when they turned into Doe Lake away from the sunset, the water and the islands looked almost black, and there was no sign of the camp-fire which she had expected to see blazing hospitably from one of the islands.

'Where are they?' lamented Gee. 'I was sure

they'd have supper all ready. I thought we'd be smelling bacon just about this time.'

'They couldn't get supper ready because nearly all the food is in Gay's canoe,' said Madge reproachfully. 'You shouldn't have taken that canvas bag, Gay: Lorry was to have it.'

'Let's keep close to the shore,' said Judy, more cheerfully than the circumstances seemed to warrant. 'We'll scout along toward Beaver River and we'll probably meet them half-way or see their fire.'

The densely wooded banks looked dark and forbidding, and Judy was conscious of a strange, sinking sensation near the pit of her stomach. Where, oh, where were the others? Why hadn't she insisted on returning earlier? Of course they could land and light a fire, perhaps they had better do that.

Just at this point in her self-upbraidings, Gay's song was answered by the Ojibway call. Judy had never thought it particularly beautiful, but it was music in her ears now.

'We're frightfully sorry,' called Miss Dunstan in another minute or two. 'Hope you haven't been anxious: we did want to get to the lake and it took longer than we expected. Have you found a camping place?'

'No, we've got the same story to tell,' said Judy,

great relief in her voice. 'This island, here, looks all right. There seem to be plenty of pine trees and there is an open space at this end.'

'Right-o,' said Miss Dunstan. 'Lead on, we'll follow. Keep close together, everybody, and go carefully, it *is* dark.'

Gay had begun to sing again, but she declared afterward that she and Jan were going as carefully as they possibly could, when, suddenly, to their great astonishment, they bumped gently against something; next moment over went the canoe, and they were down in the dark, cold water. It was not far from shore. Judy, who had already landed, was into her canoe again in a flash and paddling swiftly to the scene of the upset, leaving Jill forlorn on the beach frantically wondering if Jan and Gay would both be drowned.

Such an idea never entered their heads for a moment. Jan whipped her flashlight out of her pocket and held it high with one hand and clung to the canoe with the other, while Gay called cheerfully, 'We're all right, Dunsey, never mind us, but for pity's sake save the food! Catch that box, Di, at your left! I'll try for the bacon.'

'Gay!' Miss Dunstan's voice was stern. 'You and Jan come in at once. Leave the food! At *once*, I said.'

Gay swam in to shore feeling rather cross. What a fuss for Dunsey to make! In another minute she'd have dived for the bacon bag; it was heavy and probably went straight down; and it would have been a lark to swim in to shore 'bringing the bacon home.' However, she helped Jan in with the canoe and laughed as they squeezed the water from their clothes. No good to cry over spilt milk or lost bacon.

Jill waited to make sure that both Jan and Gay had not been hurt in any way by their ducking, and then ran to help Gee and Betsy build a fire which would do duty as light and heat at one and the same time.

Everybody talked at once, but they also managed to get things done, and presently two good fires were sending up a cheerful blaze and Di was briskly beating pancake batter. An inventory of all food supplies had revealed the startling fact that their menu would have to consist of pancakes (without syrup or butter), dried prunes, and a box of marshmallows.

Cries of delight greeted the announcement of the last item, and three cheers were immediately given for Di who had saved the box after the upset.

They had a merry supper, then spread their

ground-sheets near the fire, and, wrapped in their blankets, sang songs and held a story-telling competition, the subject being, 'The Funniest Moment of My Life,' and the prize, the remainder of the prunes.

'I'll never despise the gentle prune again,' declared Gay when the prize had been ceremoniously bestowed on her. 'Au contraire,' she continued pompously. 'Humble though it may be, rejected as it often is by gourmets, it will be in *my* eyes a symbol of this pleasant little gathering, and as such will always be treasured. Will some kind friend lend me a safety pin and I will ask Miss Dunstan to be good enough to pin on my breast this badge of honor.'

And then dropping her bombastic tone of voice she cried, 'I say, why shouldn't we have a secret society . . . just us, and have a prune for our pin?'

'How! How!' said the braves enthusiastically.

'"The Prune Club" would hardly do,' said Madge. 'I'd hate being called a "poor prune." And they'd all think we were crazy when we got back.'

'We haven't begun to *think* yet,' declared Gay eagerly. '*Of course* "Prune Club" wouldn't do.'

'How about "The Do-ers Club"?' said Judy.

'You suggested yesterday, Gay, that we should be do-ers since we're on Doe Lake.'

'Fine!' said Gay promptly. 'And everybody else in Camp would be "Don'ters." Being a "Do-er" would be all the rage, and we'd have to have a song and a slogan that would delicately emphasize our exclusiveness. Jill, you've been remarkably quiet, are you thinking up a song? Everybody get busy, please. I am nominated, seconded and carried as chairman of this meeting. Jan, you elect yourself secretary and keep track of valuable suggestions.'

Jan would have had a very busy time if she had attempted to record all the suggestions made, but after much laughter and talking, Gay called for order and Jan announced that she moved, seconded, and carried the following: 'That we have a "Do-ers Club," colors pink and red, because they "don't"; crest, a porcupine *rampant;* slogan, "If a do-er doesn't do it, it simply isn't done," password "I told you so," and song, the one that Jilly is laboriously composing at the present moment.'

This was received with cheers, cries of 'Order,' and requests for a new election.

The babel might have lasted indefinitely had not Jill and Betsy been heard singing the new song:

'I'm glad that I am a doer —
A doer who never does wrong.
I'm glad that I am a doer,
To sing this sweet little song.'

They sang it once, they sang it twice; everybody sang it. And then Miss Dunstan in an excellent imitation of a nurse's best manner said firmly: 'Come, little dears, it's your bedtime now.'

Her remark was greeted with groans, but there was little genuine reluctance about obeying it; every one was pleasantly tired and drowsy; good-nights were said, and very soon the weary campers were sound asleep.

Jill was in the midst of a most delectable dream early next morning when Jan whispered loudly in her ear, 'Wake up, Jilly, it's raining; we'll have to move. . . . Don't go to sleep again, Jilly . . . I said we were getting *wet*. . . . We'll have to move!'

Jill opened her eyes, looked at Jan and laughed, looked again, and laughed still more merrily.

'You seem to find me very funny,' began Jan patiently.

'I do, I do,' laughed Jill. 'Your face is all streaked with black, like soot . . . and so are your hands!'

'And so are you,' said Jan, taking another look at Jill.

Sleepy voices were raised in protest:

'What's the row?'

'It's far too early to get up.'

'You're a sight for sore eyes, Di!'

'What in the world?'

'Oh, Dunsey! Look at Dunsey! She's the worst of all!'

By this time every one was awake, and upon Jill's remarking gravely,

'If a dearie doesn't do it,
It simply isn't done.'

there was such a shout of laughter that all attempts at further sleeping were abandoned entirely.

'But what *have* we done?' asked Gee plaintively, looking at her streaked hands.

'We've evidently camped on an island that's been burned over recently,' said Miss Dunstan, gazing about her. 'I noticed last night that the pines were bare, but I never thought of looking at the ground. Oh, me, oh, my! What a mess we're in!'

'Oh, Jan, our clothes!' mourned Gay. 'However will we get them dry?'

'They're almost dry now,' said Jan, feeling the knickers and blouses which had been spread out by the fire the night before. 'We'll build a fire

under a shelter and they'll soon dry out. I don't believe it's going to rain very hard.'

Madge and Lorry, Betsy and Jan, elected to have another nap and lay down again in the shelter of the canoes, but the others decided to bathe and dress, and perhaps catch enough fish for breakfast, since this rainy, early-morning hour would seem to be the perfect time.

'And don't forget that we have to dive for our food,' said Gay joyfully. 'Think of all that perfectly good bacon lying somewhere about, and us starving. I was tempted to gnaw my prune in the night but honor forbade it. "No, Grace Russell," I said, "if you must starve, then starve nobly. This prune is no longer a common edible," I said.'

Jill was reduced to helpless giggles by this time. Gay was in her gayest mood, and treated the whole episode of the upset canoe and the burned camping-site as an exquisite joke which had been especially arranged for their benefit.

Miss Dunstan and Jan paddled out with Gay to the spot where they believed they had upset, and the cause of the accident was quite apparent: a 'dead-head,' a log floating low in the water so that only a small portion of it was visible, had evidently been in the path of the red canoe; it had given slightly when touched, and then swung back

into position again, knocking over the canoe as it did so.

Gay prodded the big waterlogged trunk several times with her paddle and laughed to see it inevitably return to its first position.

'Eh bien!' she observed briskly, 'now that that mystery is solved, the burial place of the bacon is the next little problem. Hard luck! It's too easy. I believe I can see the white bag down there.'

Jan paddled around near the log and Gay and Miss Dunstan dived again and again until they had recovered almost everything that had been lost, the canvas bag containing the bacon which was well wrapped in waxed paper, the butter jar, the tin of marmalade, a box of canned fruit and a tin of powdered milk.

Gay's shouts of triumph as these precious belongings were deposited by the fire and tenderly spread out to dry, brought the sleepy ones from their shelter, and lured the would-be fishermen back from their rock. After all they might not catch any fish and the bacon was undeniably already caught. A loaf of bread, wrapped in an oilskin, was discovered in the bow of Di's canoe, and very soon Lorry and Gee, who were the cooks for the day, with all the willing assistants they could use, had prepared an excellent breakfast.

The rain had ceased by this time and the sun was shining, although somewhat palely. The wind had shifted to the west, which was usually a sign of bad weather at this time of year, and Miss Dunstan feared they were in for a three days' 'blow.' She believed that by steady paddling and with no unforeseen accidents they could make Camp Conqueror that night, but as Big Chief had said that they could stay the fourth day if they wished, they had better vote as to whether they would return to-day or not.

Opinion was very much divided: it was true that the prospects for fine weather were not of the best, but they might alter entirely during the next few hours, and it would be a shame to lose a whole day's camping; on the other hand, they had certainly lost some of their supplies, and a second night in damp surroundings would not be as hilarious as the first. Finally, much to the disgust of Gay who was ready for a lark, and of Jill, who had caught Gay's mood, it was decided to proceed homewards, and, if the weather cleared, to explore Big Deer Lake more thoroughly, perhaps follow a stream they had seen on the south shore, and spend the night on Pine Point, as Jill had christened their first camping-place.

They stayed another hour on Burnt Island dry-

ing out food and clothes by two blazing fires, made sandwiches for their luncheon, and then packed up all their belongings, and set off for the portage.

Gay and Jill were together in the red canoe this time but Miss Dunstan refused to trust them with any of the food and gave them, instead, the bag of cooking utensils. Gay wept crocodile tears to think that Dunsey did not trust her, and they professed themselves heart-broken that no attempt had been made to search for the mysterious cache, and although Miss Dunstan was plainly unwilling, they coaxed and wheedled her until, relenting, she allowed them all to land on two small islands to search for buried treasure.

They were on their way again, nearly at the portage into Big Deer, when Gay uttered an exclamation of impatience.

'What's the matter?' asked Jill.

'Here we've come down the other shore of the lake, and I meant to get a snap-shot of the eagle's tree! Oh, *bother*. I haven't got one of a deer either, and it isn't likely I shall, but I could gloat a little bit if I could have one of that tree to show Phil when I tell him what a bald-headed eagle really looks like. And the eagle might have been there again if that was his regular watch-tower. Oh, bother, bother, *bother!*'

'It's too bad,' sympathized Jill. 'I'd love a picture of it myself. Oh, look! Who's that Miss Dunstan's waving to?'

'Must be Sandy Mack,' said Gay after a moment's scrutiny of a fisherman near the rocks. 'He's got a scarlet canoe there and all the rangers have those. Well, it's a good thing he's arrived, for he'll be very handy to help with the carrying.'

Evidently Gay was right, for Jill could see him come down to meet Miss Dunstan who was first to land, and then Madge and Betsy in the next canoe gave a cheer as they realized that here was a friend in need, quite accustomed to carrying a canoe on his strong shoulders.

Gay and Jill were the last in the long line, although that place belonged by rights to Judy, and as they passed a little stretch of sandy shore, Gay suddenly ran the canoe up on the beach and said quickly, 'Hop out a moment, Jilly!'

Jill jumped quickly and Gay backed out instantly and said in her most coaxing fashion:

'Jilly, be a little sport, won't you? You can climb over to the portage all right and get to the others in about one minute and a half, then make your way slowly, quite slowly, please, Jilly, down the trail to Dunsey, and ask her if I may please just slip around that point there and get a snap of

the eagle's tree. I'll be half-way back by the time you've got permission for me. Now, Jilly, *please*. Tell her they needn't wait — we'll bring our own canoe ourselves. Sandy will give us a hand, he won't be in a hurry if he's fishing. Good-bye!'

'Oh, Gay,' called Jill in feeble protest. 'Dunsey won't like it and you know we weren't to go alone anywhere.'

Gay smiled over her shoulder. 'I can't hear a single word you say.'

And away she paddled with swift, sure strokes.

Jill was uncertain whether to call again more loudly or not, when she saw Judy, who was just landing, turn to see that they were all right, and wave to Gay who was opposite the portage now. Then she saw Judy turn back, pull up the canoe, and follow the others who were probably listening to some tale of the ranger's or busily carrying the dunnage.

'Oh, well, if Judy knows, it's all right,' thought Jill, picking her way over rocks and fallen trees. 'Isn't Gay the quickest thing! She had me out of that canoe in half a second, though I don't quite know how. Dunsey will be cross, I'm afraid; Gay really shouldn't have gone alone.'

It took longer, much longer, than Gay's optimistic minute and a half to reach the portage. No

one was in sight when she arrived but Betsy who seemed to be the last in the line carrying the dunnage. She was in a great hurry and paused only long enough to call, 'You and Gay had better hurry, Jill. Sandy's telling about some moose he saw on the lake. I'm going to take his picture.'

But Jill didn't hurry. She let Betsy go on and then jumped up on a rock and looked eagerly to see if Gay had rounded the point again. But the lake was quite empty. Gay had disappeared utterly.

All the canoes were gone. They hadn't taken long this time with Sandy to help. Jill looked about to see that no dunnage had been left for her and Gay, and then followed Betsy, albeit rather slowly. There was no sign of Gay yet. Why didn't she come?

Arrived at the end of the trail she was surprised to find Sandy gone and all the campers embarked again, even Gee and Miss Dunstan who were quite near the shore.

'Gone back to get a picture? By herself?' said Miss Dunstan when Jill had told her tale. 'I thought Judy said you had landed. That's really too bad of Gay! Why didn't you stop her, Jill?'

'I couldn't very well, Dunsey,' said Jill coaxingly. 'She went off like a flash.'

'But where was she going?'

'Just a little way, to the eagle's tree. She must be coming now.'

'Well, run back and call to her to hurry,' said Miss Dunstan crisply. 'Judy and the others have gone on slowly to get luncheon ready. I'll wait there by that island for you. Bring that dunnage bag with you, please. Now hurry, Jill, the wind is rising.'

Jill listened anxiously to the sound of the wind in the tree-tops as she ran back. Dunsey was cross, but not so cross as she had feared. Had she made too light of it? Did Dunsey really remember how far away the tree was? . . . But then Gay would be back by the time she reached the shore.

But Gay was not at the shore, and nothing was to be seen or heard on all the wide empty lake, except a tern wheeling and turning far overhead and crying his harsh melancholy song.

Jill leaped up on a rock that would give her a better view and gazed long and anxiously toward the tree. Then suddenly she felt sure that some evil had befallen Gay. She would never have taken all this time to get her picture.

Back ran Jill again. It was dark on the trail now, for a sudden cloud had covered the sun. A fine, mist-like rain was blowing in from the west

along Big Deer. Standing on the shore Jill could scarcely see Miss Dunstan's canoe beside the island. She waved her arms and called: 'Gay isn't there! I can't see her.'

She was tired because of much running, and because of the fear which was slowly taking possession of her, and her voice sounded hoarse and small in her own ears.

But Dunsey must have heard her for she called back, 'All right!' and then something that ended with 'Hurry.'

Jill felt an immense relief. Dunsey would soon be here and then they'd go and find Gay. She waited, leaning against the big dunnage bag which stood lurching drunkenly against a tree-trunk. She was very tired and her head felt dizzy. Oh, what was keeping Gay?

The wind was blowing more fiercely now in a sudden squall and the rain came down in a blinding sheet. Jill pressed in close beside the tree and waited another long minute. Why *didn't* Dunsey come? She had said she would hurry.

But the word 'hurry' woke some thought in Jill's tired brain. Had Dunsey really said *she* would hurry, or — or what? Had she told *her*, Jill, to hurry? . . . But then Gay wasn't here yet. Oh! What was happening to Gay?

Jill took a step or two nearer the shore and called again, desperately. There was no answer but the rain drumming fiercely on the water. She came back to her shelter and crouched beside the big dunnage bag. Huddled against the tree it looked almost like a fellow-camper who had taken refuge from the rain, thought Jill, pulling it about to protect her from the drenching storm. Then she uttered a startled exclamation. Had Dunsey too thought the bag a person — Gay, in fact — and had she told *them* to hurry?

Jill ran down to the shore once more and called again and again: 'Hallo! Hallo! Dunsey! Dunsey!'

But the wind whipped the words from her lips and carried them over the portage. Jill stood waiting, two minutes, five minutes. They were not coming back for her right away, it seemed, and Gay was in trouble.

Jill stayed no longer. She turned and ran up the trail once more. Dunsey had all the rest with her. She would know where to follow when she found Jill gone, and Gay was all alone and needed her.

CHAPTER XI

LOST!

This time Jill wasted no time gazing toward the eagle's tree. Gay was not in sight; she had hardly expected her. The thing to do now was to reach the point with the least possible delay.

It was hard going: near the portage the shore was sandy and Jill ran lightly along the damp margin by the water, but then came a stretch where fallen trees and thick underbrush barred her way, and over these she must push her way and climb: then another gravelly, sandy stretch, and after that the bank was steep so she waded through the water, which was fortunately shallow enough, rather than climb the hill and force a way through the thick trees.

Once or twice she paused to send a call back in the direction of the portage in case Dunsey and the others had already arrived, but there was no answer, and the rain was so heavy that she could not have seen them had they been there.

Wet to the skin and panting with her exertions Jill pulled herself around a tree which sprawled across the tip of the wooded point and looked with frantic eagerness for Gay. She *must* be here.

The little bay was quieter than the lake, but just as forlornly empty of any sign of the lost Gay.

But, no! What was that over yonder amongst the water-lilies?

'Gay!' screamed Jill. 'Gay!'

There was no answer but the lapping of the little waves on the shore.

Something was there, something *red*. Yet it did not look like a canoe.

Leaping from tree to shore, and from shore to rock, and splashing through the shallow water, Jill saw more clearly: yes, it was a canoe floating there among the lilies, but a canoe broken and mangled. Not Gay's, then. Then everything went black for a moment before Jill's eyes, for she saw something else floating in the water: she looked again and saw that it was only the dunnage bag Dunsey had given them to carry. Gay's canoe, then, it must be, but where was Gay? Would she find her here, too, in the water?

Panic seized upon Jill as she hunted among the reeds and lily-pads and she called until she could call no more. Gay could not answer for Gay was dead, she thought wildly. Gay! *Gay!*

The rain, only a passing squall after all, was ceasing now, so that Jill could see more clearly, and she was soon convinced that Gay was not in

'GAY!' SCREAMED JILL. 'GAY!'

the shallow water in the neighborhood of the canoe. Pictures of Gay drowned and lying at the bottom of the lake floated before her eyes, and all her old shuddering dread of deep water returned. But she fiercely drove away the threatening fear. She must think. She must think calmly and coolly. Had Gay had an upset? If so, she was a good swimmer, a splendid swimmer, and would be somewhere on the shore waiting for help, tired, perhaps, after her swim.

But, in that case, why was the canoe here? If Gay had abandoned it farther out, it would have drifted down the lake. And how did it come to be so broken? As if some great creature had trampled it under foot. . . . Trampled? That brought back the remembrance of the camp-fire story of the great moose trampling the bear. And hadn't Betsy, at the portage, said that Sandy was telling about a moose he had seen?

Supposing Gay had gotten out of her canoe to get something and a moose had smashed the canoe — it would be angry, of course, to do that, and Gay would have to flee for her life.

In mounting excitement Jill hunted eagerly in the sand for any foot-prints of Gay or of any wild creatures. If only the rain had not come down!

Just a few minutes of searching and then she

uttered a cry of joy. Back a little way from the shore under the trees were deep prints of little feet, not one trail it seemed, but dozens of them: then she was right in one particular, — this was a runway, a place where deer or moose came down to drink.

Now to find some trace of Gay.

Eagerly Jill examined the trails again, and choosing the most promising one, started off in great excitement. But she soon found that she could not go very quickly, for this was no plainly marked path like the trail at the portage. Indeed, if Jill had not been so anxious to have a trail to follow, she might very easily have been convinced that it had soon disappeared.

However, the trees did not grow very close together here, so it was comparatively easy to go forward, and Jill told herself that deer had surely brushed aside these bushes or trampled that moss, and that very soon she would catch up with Gay who had run down this very aisle between these great trees.

Then suddenly, or so it seemed, Jill found herself in a grove of tall, slim pine trees, dozens and dozens of them — no, hundreds and hundreds. No matter in which direction Jill turned, there were more of these straight young trees, and she

saw, after some time spent in scouting, that if the trail had really led as far as the pine grove, it did not go any farther.

'Too bad,' said Jill to a little chipmunk who was regarding her with bright friendly eyes, and who seemed to be the only living creature in this dim, quiet place. 'How would you like to come back with me? I'd like company very much indeed, for I've got to turn right around, go back the way I came, and then try another trail.'

But the chipmunk scampered away on his own business, and Jill, alas! had turned around several times already while she was searching for a way out, and now, try as she might, she could not find the path by which she had entered.

It was very quiet under the trees, the wind had dropped and there was no sound but a gentle sighing of the branches far overhead. So still was it that Jill fancied she could hear her own quick heart-beats, and she was quite certain that she heard a tiny voice say: 'You're lost! You're lost!'

Instantly Jill began to hum, 'Are we happy? Are we happy?' but while she sang she was hunting eagerly for any landmark which would call to her remembrance her first sight of the pine trees. If only she had been carrying the hatchet, she might have blazed her way. Had she been dream-

ing when she came in here? What *had* she been thinking of?

All the trees looked alike: the lower branches bare and brittle and dry, the trunks slim and straight and tall, the upper branches waving gently in the breeze, soft and velvety and darkly green. They were all the same.

'You're lost,' whispered the tiny voice of fear again. 'You'll never find the trail again; perhaps there was no trail, you only imagined it. . . . The others will never find you away out here. . . . You'll starve to death, if some wild beast doesn't get you. . . . You were silly to leave the shore of the bay, silly to leave the portage. . . . Dunsey was the one to hunt for Gay. . . . Perhaps Gay is back with the others now. . . . *You*'ll never get back. . . .'

Jill had listened long enough.

'Of course I'll get back, stupid,' she said scornfully. 'There's a way there and I'm going to find it. Now, let me think — I've gone this way and that, let's try this.'

There were any number of little aisles any one of which might lead out. So Jill hung her knapsack on the branches of one tree which she determined to keep in sight as a sort of guide, and then she continued to search.

Judy's warnings, Dunsey's story of her lost brother, old tales of the sad fate of travelers lost in great forests, even the pathetic old story of the Babes in the Wood flitted through Jill's mind, but she refused to allow herself to heed them.

'I must find the way,' she said again and again.

And after long search she did.

Just as suddenly as she had found herself in the grove, she saw again the open stretch of land along which she had traced a path. Surely she had rested beside that rock, had pulled some of those thimbleberries. And yes, yes, certainly, that clump of scarlet tamaracks had called forth an exclamation of pleasure when she had passed them by before.

With shining eyes and quickened breath Jill retraced her steps: she went slowly, bending all her energy toward remembering which way she had previously taken, for no mistake must be made now, but she must have been more observant than she had known, for she took the right turn at each doubtful spot, and by and by she saw again the gleam of water and was back in the little bay beside the water-lily pads and the broken canoe.

First a look all about, and a calling of 'Hallo! Hallo! Gay! Dunsey! Hallo!' Then a long drink from the lake, and a little rest. Jill wished that

Camp Conqueror girls were not *always* brave, for *almost* she would have liked to fling herself down on the sand and weep. She had been afraid, sorely afraid. It wasn't a pleasant place to think about — that pine grove.

But there was something else to think about: since there was no search party here (perhaps they had gone up the other side of the lake) what was she to do now? Wait until some one came for her? Or make a second attempt to find Gay? There was something sinister and menacing about that broken canoe. Oh! *What* had happened?

Jill got up and wandered about restlessly, looking up the lake and down the lake: she didn't want to go back into the woods again — she had escaped once, she might not a second time . . . and yet . . . she was the only one in all the world who knew anything at all about Gay's disappearance . . . the only one who could help . . . and a Camp Conqueror girl — What was that?

With a cry of joy she bounded forward and picked up something which lay shining at the side of the runway. It was a camera! Gay's camera! Jill held it close, and called again and again 'Gay! Gay!'

There was no answer, only the camera in her hand, but that seemed sufficient; Jill cast another

longing look in the direction of the portage, and then set out again on the new trail.

This path was not so plainly marked as the first one, but she hurried along full of hope that at the next turn she would meet Gay: she rounded many turns and met no one, saw no sign of Gay's having passed there: great oaks and maples gave place to cedar and tamarack and scrub poplar: several swampy places had to be circled; rocks began to show through the thin top soil and the trees grew sparser: at last there was a bare-looking little hill ahead crowned by a small group of twisted pine trees.

As she looked at the hill Jill felt that it marked the end of her journey. She had come a long, long way — just how far she did not like to think.

But afternoon shadows were lengthening now; it would be almost dark under the big trees: she must turn back once more.

She was bitterly disappointed. How heart-breaking to fail again! She had felt so sure of finding Gay this time. It didn't bear thinking about.

'Cheer up, old dear,' she said aloud, patting first one arm and then the other. 'Never say die! A good hearty halloo-ing before we go. Let's make the welkin ring. And how about climbing that hill

first to view the landscape o'er . . . with a little trouble those fine phrases could be made into a poem. . . . Hallo! There's a crow wheeling about and scolding just the way one did on Big Deer. . . . He *is* cross. . . . You don't suppose he sees me yet? . . . Could he be seeing anybody else?'

Tired as she was, away sped Jill up the little hill. As she neared the top she waited for a moment to get her breath, then put her hands trumpet-wise to her mouth and shouted with all her strength: 'Gay! Gay! Hallo!'

And, wonder of wonders, this time there was an answer!

Frantic with delight Jill ran up the remaining few yards to the trees, looked down the other side, and there at the foot of the slope stood Gay!

In another minute or two Jill had covered the intervening distance by a series of leaps and bounds which would have done credit to a genuine Ojibway warrior, and her arms were around Gay who clung to her as if she would never let her go, but spoke no word.

But Jill understood: her own lips were trembling, and tears would do Gay good.

So she talked steadily over one of Gay's shoulders, paying no attention to the shudders that shook those same shoulders every few seconds: she

told her about how she'd seen Dunsey, who wasn't so *very* cross, and about Sandy Mack, who had carried the canoes over the portage and had told such interesting stories about some moose he'd seen on the lake, that they had not been missed at first.

'Jill,' cried Gay, suddenly drawing back. 'You haven't seen any moose about here, have you?'

Then before Jill could answer she gave a little cry and clung to her arm again, as if for support.

'No, of course I haven't seen any,' said Jill cheerfully, although her heart sank as she saw Gay's face clearly for the first time. 'What's the matter, Gay? Tell me.'

'It's nothing much, just my ankle sprained a bit,' said Gay, trying to recapture her old air of gay indifference. 'I stumbled when I was running over these rocks and hit my ankle and my head. I thought no one could *ever* find me, and I couldn't crawl, I tried it, but I nearly went to sleep, my head was so dizzy. Jilly, may I have a drink, please, I'm awfully thirsty.'

'Surely you may,' said Jill, trying to keep her voice steady and squeezing the tears out of her eyes with an impatient shake of her head. Poor darling old Gay! So that was why she looked so queer. She was hurt and suffering.

Gently she helped Gay to sit with her back to a tree and unlaced the shoe on the injured foot, wondering meanwhile where she was to get the promised water. She was a long, long way from the little bay. Where *was* the bay? She shut her mind firmly on that disturbing question; it could wait.

Gay had closed her eyes and sat leaning against the trunk of the tree. She looked very white and very, very tired.

Once more Jill felt panic threatening to overwhelm her, and once more she said to herself, 'Steady, now, steady — I've got to *think* and think coolly. Where can I get some water quickly? Those basswood leaves are dripping yet with the rain; they'll do to moisten her lips, first of all, and then I'll hunt around for a rain-pool in these rocks . . . it ought to be tolerably clean.'

Jill hunted about at the foot of the hill and found as she had hoped a little rain-pool. It did not look very inviting but Gay seemed very thirsty and Jill hoped there would be no germs so far away in the wilderness. Gay drank a few mouthfuls eagerly, but did not seem at all curious to know how she had been found, but only said drowsily: 'You won't go away, Jilly, promise me. Then I'll go to sleep.'

'I'd better bathe and bandage your ankle first,' said Jill gently, undoing the shoe on the injured foot, the tears welling up in her eyes again as Gay winced with pain.

She set herself resolutely to her task: it would hurt, but Gay couldn't walk with a foot in that condition, and they must get back to the lake before dark to meet Dunsey and the others who would be frightfully worried.

She worked skillfully and quickly, rejoicing that she had her little First Aid Kit in her knapsack and glad, too, that she'd taken First Aid lessons with Docky only two weeks ago. Her fingers were light and quick, and Docky had said that she had a good hand for bandaging, but practicing on Gee's perfectly sound ankle was a very different matter to handling Gay's swollen, sore one. However it was done at last, and Gay murmured 'Thank you,' although she didn't even open her eyes, and refused a piece of chocolate which Jill coaxed her to eat, saying again that she was very tired and would have a sleep first.

'She's absolutely worn out,' said Jill to herself as she rolled up her sweater coat and put it under Gay's head. 'I'll climb that tree and see if I can get any idea of how far away the lake is. It's going to be dark before we know where we are.'

The crow's tree proved hard to climb, and her hands and knees were scratched and bleeding before she got high enough to get a good view. But when she twisted herself around on a big branch and looked over the tops of the nearby trees she uttered a cry of joy. There, to the south of the hill, not so very far away she could see through the leaves the gleam of the shining waters of Doe Lake.

'Isn't it just too wonderful!' thought Jill, clambering down in huge excitement. 'We've been traveling in a circle after all! Lost people do, Dunsey said. She was right. Joy, oh, joy! . . . We'll get down there right away . . . and they'll find us for *sure* to-night!'

And at the thought of Judy and Jan, Jill's eyes filled to overflowing with happy tears. Oh, it had been such a *long* time! Wouldn't it be *splendid* to be with the others again!

She hurried eagerly to tell Gay the good news; Gay was very reluctant to move. But Jill was gently persistent: she couldn't understand Gay's attitude but wouldn't let herself take time to think about it. They *must* reach the lake.

At last Gay got up and tried her weight on the injured foot. It evidently still hurt but she could use it, and with infinite patience and many rests

Jill coaxed and commanded her to make the journey.

Probably Gay suffered much in the rough going, but Jill scarcely less. It was farther to the lake than she had expected and just as the twilight was rapidly deepening into night, they emerged from a grove of trees and saw the water gleaming darkly before them. Jill scarcely glanced at it until she had found a mossy spot where she could make Gay comfortable; she covered her with her sweater coat, and then hurried down to see if there were any sign of a search party on the lake.

The lake?

A startled cry of dismay escaped her lips as she gazed before her.

Why had she been so sure that this beckoning water was Doe Lake with the little bay where Dunsey and Judy would be sure to find them?

This was no lake, but a river, a strange, unfamiliar river, flowing on inexorably to some equally unknown lake in the wilderness. Across, on the opposite bank, was a forest ranger's abandoned hut, the windows gaping holes, the door swinging by one hinge.

Jill knelt, filled her cup, and drank of the cool water; then she carried a cupful to Gay, saw that she was fast asleep and went back to the brink

of the river and tried once more to think calmly: They were lost, no use trying to evade it now. . . . She hadn't any idea as to how she could get back to the bay with the lily-pads and the broken canoe. . . . And Gay was hurt, how badly she didn't know though she had a vague remembrance that a blow on the head made one drowsy. . . . Gay couldn't be left. . . . And they had no matches to make a smoky fire to show Dunsey where they were. . . . Jan would be awfully unhappy to-night. . . . And Judy, because she must have thought that Gay was going to land at the portage. . . . But Dunsey had misunderstood too. . . . Oh, why hadn't she gone more quickly to tell Dunsey!

Wearily Jill rehearsed the events of the day, wondering if she had done thus or so, if this need not have happened. The more she wondered, the more miserable she felt. She could not bear to think of to-morrow. . . . If Gay were worse, what *would* she do! Dunsey would have to send word to the Camp if she could not find them, and how would Big Chief feel when she heard?

All the light was gone from the west now and the stars were twinkling far overhead. The deserted cabin across the river stood blackly against the bushes. Jill could see its vacant, staring eyes, and suddenly it seemed to her as if it laughed, cruelly,

mockingly — no, that was a loon. Again came the strange, weird, lonely sound. A wave of despair threatened to overwhelm Jill at last. This mocking laughter seemed more than she could bear. Then suddenly she jumped to her feet and said defiantly: 'Yes — I know we're lost but — but we're going to find a way out — We *must* — We'll get home to-morrow. . . . We'll tell them all about it at Council Ring on Saturday night — the day after to-morrow.'

The thought of Council Ring in the valley, with all the friendly faces shining in the flickering light of the camp-fire, and Big Chief in her accustomed place, was extraordinarily comforting. She could see the serene, unafraid eyes of Big Chief quite clearly, could almost hear her say again as she had said one night not long ago, 'You need never be afraid, my braves, if you stand erect looking up at the stars and ask for help, for help will come to you; the Great Good Spirit will always give to those who ask.' . . .

Involuntarily Jill straightened her shoulders and looked up at the stars as she had done night after night at the close of Council Ring. There were all the hosts of stars that she had looked at so often this summer, and again, as before, she felt her own infinite smallness, her own unimportance. But

somehow or other they looked different to-night — more friendly; she'd forgotten about the North Star . . . she'd find it presently for it would give her the direction in which the river flowed. . . . A friendly star . . . perhaps the great mysterious multitude of stars was friendly. . . . What if the whole universe were friendly?. . . If that were true how . . . how *wonderful!* . . . One need *never* be afraid. A great friendly Spirit ruled it . . . and He was powerful . . . and Big Chief said He was willing to aid those who asked.

Jill had grown accustomed to sending up a little grateful wordless prayer of thanks in the Council Ring service for the happy days in Camp, so now she asked for help quite simply with no long words or phrases hard to understand.

And an answer of reassurance and comfort came swiftly, — so swiftly, that almost with the saying of her prayer she felt the oppression of fears slip from her like the bundle from the Pilgrim's shoulders, and, comforted and blessed, she lay down beside Gay and fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER XII

JILL, CONQUEROR

JILL awoke very early next morning to find the sun shining and Gay bending over her. But what a different Gay! Still white and tired-looking, but with the old gallant smile.

'Jilly, I was afraid I was dreaming! That it was too good to be true, when I woke and found you here. Then I wondered if it were *all* a dream — a bad dream — until I tried to get up.'

'How is your poor ankle?' asked Jill quickly. 'And your head?'

'A bit stiff and hard to work, both of 'em, thank you,' said Gay cheerfully. 'Not "going strong," yet, but give me time — and a little breakfast. Do my eyes deceive me, or are those thimbleberries hanging just beyond your head?'

'Bless you — and them,' cried Jill, jumping to her feet. 'Gay! It's *so* good to see you smiling again. Now for those berries, and there's some chocolate, too!'

'Chocolate!' cried Gay. 'And I didn't know! — There are several other things that I don't know. You begin, Jilly — your story first. Where are the others and how *did* you find me?'

'There's more about the *not* finding you, I fear,' said Jill, busily picking berries into her cup. 'It must have seemed a long time to you before I got here.'

'It did, I give you my word it did,' said Gay gravely. 'But don't let me get started. What happened when you got to the portage?'

Jill divided the chocolate and the berries, and then proceeded to give Gay a faithful account of her finding of the canoe and her long search for its missing occupant. 'I never was very fond of crows,' she concluded, 'but I'll always have an affectionate regard for that old fellow on the hill up there.'

'I was using him,' said Gay smiling. 'My head felt queer — I bumped it pretty hard when I fell — but I just had wits enough left to know that I was lost, and that I should do something about it: the crow squawked angrily when I reached his hill, and I remembered the one we had seen that first day on Big Deer who scolded and scolded and seemed to be telling everything for miles around that we were there, so I threw a stone or two at his tree to keep him talking — and I hoped, oh, *how* I hoped, that some one would hear him and find me.'

'Please begin at the beginning,' coaxed Jill,

settling herself comfortably. 'We must be up and doing very soon, but you talk while I eat.'

'I can't believe that it only happened yesterday,' said Gay dreamily. 'It seems weeks ago. However — I reached the point quite quickly, after I left you stranded on the beach, got my snapshot of the eagle's tree (the eagle was nowhere to be seen), and was just turning back to paddle double speed for the portage — if only I had gone straight on! I'd hardly have been late at all! — when I saw an awkward-looking long-legged little creature browsing on lily-pads. He was the quaintest thing! "Must be a moose calf," I said to myself. He was in a poor light for a picture, too shady, so I decided to get as close as I possibly could. I got my camera ready and paddled along Indian-fashion until I was about ten feet away from him. He didn't seem a bit frightened, just wrinkled his long nose and waggled his ears. I snapped him quickly and was winding up the camera for another shot, when I heard a queer noise behind me; I don't know what it sounded like, then there was a great crashing in the bushes, and I looked over my shoulder and saw an immense moose making straight for me. I s'pose it was the calf's mother, I didn't see any antlers; she looked about eight feet high, though I didn't spend my leisure making

accurate observations. May I have another drink of that delicious river coffee?'

'Go on, Gay,' urged Jill. 'That's a horrid place to stop.'

'It *was* a horrid place to stop,' laughed Gay. 'I decided that, myself, on the instant. I'd put down my paddle to use the camera, and anyway, I couldn't possibly have gone quickly enough to escape her that way. So before she charged the canoe I, gracefully but swiftly, jumped overboard still clutching my camera, at least it was hanging on my arm by a strap, vous savez. I splashed into deep water, dived, swam across one end of the bay and disappeared promptly from view. From the noise, I imagine Madam Moose was having a "bang-up" time with the poor canoe — 'scuse the joke, Jilly — but I didn't stay for her party. I didn't like the look in her eye, at all, at all.'

Jill laughed again. No doubt about it, Gay was almost her own jolly self once more.

'And what then?' she asked.

'Oh, then, I had rather a poor sort of time,' confessed Gay. 'I ran along thinking I'd cross to the other side of the bay and come out near the portage, and I have a faint recollection of dropping the camera because it bumped me. Then when I got near this little hill I tripped on a rock and

tumbled down, and after that everything is jumbly and queer. But I guess I wasn't very happy until I woke and saw your blessed little face. I — I —— ' Gay choked and cleared her throat, 'I'm — not as ungrateful as I sound, Jilly. You *know* that, don't you? Nobody but you would have been brave enough to keep her wits and understand what had happened and then follow right into the forest with any number of chances of getting lost.'

'Oh, *no!*' began Jill.

'Yes, you must let me, Jilly. I've had time to do some pretty straight thinking this morning: you've made me feel ashamed of myself ever so often this summer, you and Big Chief — yes, it's true, don't please interrupt me, *please* let me finish — I behaved *rottenly* the time I coaxed you into the water and nearly drowned you ages ago, and — and being with you has made me see that things Big Chief said were true — about trying hard to conquer our weaknesses — and not being so thoughtless — and being decent to everybody — and being true friends — I'm glad I've been with you and Jan — I hope she won't hate me for this — and when we get back I'm going to have a new try at things — an honest to goodness fight. Can you forgive me, Jilly, for getting you into this mess? I don't deserve it, I know that.'

'How can you say such things!' said Jill huskily, though her eyes were shining and she felt so happy she could hardly bear it. 'Well, then, of course I forgive you — gladly — though I hardly know what for. Gay, isn't Big Chief wonderful and aren't you glad we belong to Camp Conqueror?'

There could only be one answer to that, and then Jill got briskly to her feet.

'We mustn't forget that Dunsey and Judy are still looking for us,' she observed. 'I'll call again from the hill and then we'll see about getting down the river. Oh, I forgot to tell you, I woke up in the night — wasn't it nice it was so warm? — and had a look at the Dipper and the North Star, and I believe this river must be flowing straight south; that would take us right down to the lake where we'll find the others.'

'But how?' asked Gay ruefully, stepping carefully with the injured ankle. 'It will be pretty slow going I'm afraid, if we try to walk.'

'We'll find a way,' said Jill confidently.

She went down to the water's edge and stood for a moment gazing across at the ranger's hut. How different it looked this morning. The windows were broken, to be sure, but the sun shone brightly on the broken bits of glass and far from seeming to be menacing or sinister, the little house appeared

to be smiling in the friendliest fashion and trying to say, 'Come on over: Why don't you use me? I'm here to be used. Perhaps I can help you.'

Jill could have shouted for joy: here was an answer. Perhaps there was food or matches to be had there; rangers often left supplies hidden for just such an emergency; perhaps there was a boat tucked away under the bushes. Just what she would find she didn't know, but something surely.

She sat down at once on the sand and began to take off her shoes and stockings.

'Too bad I haven't got my bathing suit in my knapsack,' she said laughingly to Gay when she had explained her plan. 'I'd make a poor Robinson Crusoe: he got lots of nice things from the wreck, didn't he? And do you remember the Swiss Family Robinsons? I used to gloat over the list of things they saved; they seemed the richest people in the whole world when I was very, very young. Now, do you think I can take the hatchet? Good thing you had it. I'll put the belt on upside down, and swing the case between my shoulders. There may be lumber for a raft and it's such a nice useful hatchet.'

Gay watched Jill preparing for her swim and said nothing at all. She hated to see her go. Had Jill

forgotten that the river was quite wide and presumably deep?

'Sure you aren't afraid to go, Jilly?' she said at length, hesitatingly. 'Suppose we wait awhile?'

Jill's eyes opened widely in astonishment. 'Afraid?' she laughed. 'I couldn't be . . . not looking straight up . . . I mean . . . *no* . . . not a bit. You sit out here and watch me.'

She pushed off and swam steadily and mechanically, her mind intent on what she might find. Matches? Then a smudge fire of course, so the smoke would be a guide to Dunsey — poor Dunsey. . . . Food? She hoped, oh, she *did* hope there'd be something. . . . Gay looked awfully white this morning. A boat? oh, a *boat!* . . . One mustn't count on it — but a raft certainly. . . . The door might do, a fine idea . . . strengthen the door with some young birch trunks. . . . And sail down to Doe Lake. Wouldn't it be gorgeous to see everybody again. . . . Especially Jan — poor Jan.

Not one thought did Jill give to the deep water through which she was swimming so easily: she couldn't spare a thought for such a commonplace.

Climbing out on the beach she waved joyously to Gay, wrung the water out of her knickers and then ran to the hut. Her first glance warned her not to expect anything: it was a bare room, with

two bunks across one end, a stove red with rust, a table and bench, a sagging, leaky roof, a swinging, creaky door — nothing, nothing at all, on the shelves behind the stove, which probably had served the occupant as pantry. Almost breathless with excitement Jill hunted for even one match. There were no corners or crannies where precious possessions might be hidden, but she looked inside the stove and the oven, and inside and underneath the bunks and along the ledge above the door. Nothing at all — yes, an old fishing rod lay across the two rafters supporting the roof, and, hurrah! beside it a paddle, cracked and warped, to be sure, but still a paddle.

Jill's cheeks flushed with excitement and her eyes shone.

Now for a raft. The table might do. . . . No, it was too heavy. . . . The door would be better. . . . Those big nails which the ranger had used for coat-hooks would help splendidly.

But she hadn't yet looked for a boat. And Gay would be waiting anxiously. She ran out and waved the paddle at Gay and began to search outside the hut.

There was quite a substantial woodpile at the back door, and on the outside wall hung a rusty dishpan, a frying pan, and a dipper. Jill investi-

gated them but decided sorrowfully that they were of no earthly use, unless it might be to carry water to put out a fire — and they were not likely to need them for that, worse luck!

A thick underbrush of berry bushes and juniper grew almost up to the door. Jill poked about in it with her paddle and followed a path down to a little cove where the ranger perhaps had been wont to go to fill his water pail. It would have been an ideally sheltered harbor for a canoe or skiff, but there was no sign of any boat, and Jill was just going to return to the hut and begin work on her raft when she saw a bit of weather-beaten board lying beside a juniper bush.

'That may be useful for the raft,' she said to herself, bending down to lift it. To her surprise it wouldn't move; she pushed aside the big prickly bush and cried aloud with delight! The board was part of the bottom of a skiff, probably a fishing-boat used by the owner of the fishing rod in the hut. It was partly covered with sand, and almost entirely concealed by the juniper bush which had proved to be an efficient guardian.

With hands that trembled a little she scooped away the sand and surveyed her prize. Alas, a great hole gaped across one end. But Jill, who really at the bottom of her heart was yearning to

make the raft, refused to be depressed, broke off a straight dry twig from a near-by pine tree, measured the size of the hole, and went to investigate the woodpile as to possibilities for a patch. Nothing suitable was to be found there. The doorstep was wide enough although too long, but she took it since she could not be too particular. Getting out the nails from behind the door proved to be no easy task, but by knocking them this way and that, tugging and tugging and knocking them again, she finally secured four. Then with her strange treasure trove, she went out on the beach, waved to Gay once more, and shouted the word 'Boat!' Gay nodded, and Jill set to work with a will.

First of all the boat must be gotten out from the bushes on to the open beach, and this was such a long, heavy, exhausting piece of work that there were moments when she was tempted to give it up and try the raft. But her good common sense told her that the skiff was their best chance, so she tugged, and pulled, and scraped, until finally the heavy, stout little craft lay out on the sand.

With infinite care she measured her board and shaped it as nearly as she could to the size of the hole, drove in her four long nails, and refused to be cast down because, in spite of her efforts, two cracks

she had not been able to cover, gave promise of serious leakage.

'There's the dipper and the frying pan for bailing, so that's all right,' she assured herself cheerfully. 'I'll get across to Gay and we'll contrive some way of stopping these leaks.'

A few minutes more and she was paddling her awkward craft across the stream, and Cleopatra in her gorgeous, silken-hung barge was never so proud or happy as this sunburnt, tired, hungry, but triumphant camper.

'It's almost too good to be true, Jilly!' cried Gay as Jill neared the shore. 'Will it really hold us? Oh, *Jilly!* You're the best scout ever! Let's get away. But you're tired, you'd better rest first.'

'Never felt less like resting in my life,' declared Jill, 'but we'll have to stuff these cracks. I wasn't sure whether the poor old thing would make it or not.'

'We could get some gum from the spruce and pine trees,' said Gay eagerly. 'That's what the rangers use sometimes, and then there's the adhesive tape. You've a good long roll yet in your First Aid Kit. And we can use our stockings and handkerchiefs.'

'Splendid!' cried Jill. 'I'll fetch and carry, and

you can sit on the sand like a lady and fill up the holes.'

It was quite a little job to get enough resin and gum, but Jill worked eagerly, for she was quite as anxious as Gay to be gone, and before the sun was high at noonday, they were paddling slowly downstream exulting in the fact that their amateur caulking was serving the purpose, and straining their eyes for a first sight of the lake they prayed they might find.

They had not so very far to go after all before they came to the little bay with the lily-pads and the broken canoe. They must have wandered almost in a circle. Neither of them had noticed that one end of the bay narrowed into the mouth of a river. Now they wondered how they could have helped seeing it.

'Except,' said Gay smiling, 'that we were both intensely interested in other things when we were here before.'

It wasn't far to the portage, but it was such hard work steering the clumsy skiff that Jill entirely forgot to shout in case any of the party might be about, and Gay seemed occupied with her own thoughts. Perhaps she was wondering how she was to tell Miss Dunstan how sorry she felt for her carelessness and disobedience to orders.

'Let's go quietly down the path,' said Jill, almost dancing with excitement. 'I feel just sure somebody is at the other end of the trail waiting there in case we turn up. Let's surprise them!'

'Wait a minute,' said Gay, and her lips trembled in spite of herself. 'Before we see the others — there'll be quite a fuss, you know. Our camp has always prided itself on having no accidents, and you'll probably be blamed too. . . . I'm awfully sorry about it, Jilly.'

Jill threw her arms around Gay's neck and gave her what must have been a highly satisfactory answer, for the next moment Gay was limping down the path one hand on Jill's shoulder.

And there at the end of the trail was not one camper, but all the ten of them, sitting very quietly in various attitudes of fatigue and depression, watching two of their number cook the luncheon.

Oh, what a joyful meeting it was!

Jan couldn't speak at all at first; she held one of Jilly's arms tight, tight, and presently murmured that she'd go and get some wood, but Jill told her not to be a goose, and asked indignantly if she didn't want to know what they had been doing.

Gay had gone straight to Miss Dunstan to confess her sins, but Miss Dunstan had her arms

around her in a moment, and there were tears in her eyes as she said joyfully, 'Oh! To think that you are both *safe*. Nothing else matters now.'

Then Madge was heard observing prosaically: 'They're starving, Lorry. What about serving luncheon?' And soon they were eating and talking and laughing all at the same time.

What a lot of questions were asked and answered! Jill told her story, and Gay hers, and then they had to hear about the search parties of yesterday and of this morning, and how they had gone up the same side of the lake down which they had come, for Dunsey hadn't heard about the eagle's tree, and how they had hunted in the woods, and how Judy was going down with three of the campers after luncheon to report to Big Chief, who wouldn't be worried yet, of course, because she did not expect them until to-night: and how Jill had been right in her surmises as to Judy's thinking that she was with Gay in the canoe and that they were just going to land, and how Dunsey had indeed mistaken the dunnage bag for Gay stooping down on the shore. Oh, they talked and talked and talked! And when Gay had finished the tale of Jill's gallant search and rescue, how she was lost on the first trail, and went back again a second time, the campers cheered Jill to the echo,

and Di said she was proud as proud, to be in the same tribe as such a brave, such a *courageous*, warrior.

Jill had had many happy moments this summer; this was the happiest.

And there was still the exciting homecoming to Camp and a royal welcome from all the campers and Big Chief, and a long, long talk with Jan next day. There was so much to tell Jan that Jill felt she would never catch up.

But of that moment of despair when she heard the laugh of the loon, and of her vision of a friendly universe, of her cry for help and the swift sure answer, Jill spoke to no one.

These things she kept, and 'pondered them in her heart.'

CHAPTER XIII

THE BLUE FEATHER OF HONOR

'Oh, dear!' sighed Jill, watching Gay take down the Wigwoo's pretty chintz curtains. 'I hate to see everything being packed away, don't you? It's looked so nice all summer.'

'Not every day, in every way,' said Gee slyly. 'Though I must say you've improved, Jill.'

'Shoes are the worst to remember,' said Jill gloomily. 'They will get under the bed when I'm not noticing: they walk there themselves, I'm quite sure of it.'

'I wonder if the Pagoda will get the cup this year?' said Gay, who had been folding up the chintzes and putting them in a box for next season. 'Lor is certain they'll get it; and I told her I don't mind as long as it's in the family, so to speak.'

'I think we've a good chance of the shield for the best scroll,' said Jan suddenly. 'Madge has worked awfully hard and Jilly's poems have not been half bad. Here's your hatchet, Jilly. Better pack it now, and your sweater. What's this old white bathing cap doing here underneath the sweater? Hallo, there are three pins fastening it.'

'I forgot all about it,' declared Jill, her cheeks rather pink. 'Dear me, it seems ages since I pinned that up. I must be at least five years older and wiser. But there ought to be four pins, Jan.'

'I took mine out a long time ago,' said Gee meaningly.

'Yours?' asked Jan.

'Yes, I guessed, Jilly,' continued Gee. 'You loaned me 'The Four Feathers' you remember, and something you said helped me to guess. You did put it up on purpose, didn't you?'

'Yes,' answered Jill soberly. 'I felt I'd been a coward and I hoped the white cap would remind me that I must learn to — to conquer my fears.'

'And you meant to do brave deeds like the man in the story who redeemed his cowardice so that his friends took back the white feathers he sent them, didn't you?' asked Gee eagerly. 'Well, I took out *my* pin long ago, when you jumped down off the roof and tried to kill a bear single-handed.'

'What!' cried Jill and Jan and Gay as one person.

'Gee, you're a remarkable person,' said Gay quickly. 'You don't say half or quarter as much as we do, but you just sit and observe the rest of us being silly. I guess it's because you're going to be an artist.'

'Jilly, is it true? But of course it is, it's just like you,' said Jan, pulling out one of the remaining pins. 'Does anybody question my right to take one of these? If so I'd like to remind them of a forest fire and a heroine who saved a camper's life.'

'The ayes have it,' said Gee promptly.

'If any one questions my right to the other *two*,' said Gay a trifle huskily, 'I'll take 'em outside and — and engage them in mortal combat. Nobody needs to be reminded why, I hope. There are your pins, Jilly. I'd have the glass heads made into a pendant and wear it on a platinum and diamond chain if I had the honor of owning them.'

'What'll I do with this rag of a cap?' asked Jan, holding up the torn white cap for all to see.

'Throw it out the window and let the chipmunks try to eat it,' answered Gee promptly. 'I've got something to take its place.'

'There's the first bugle for Council Ring,' said Gay, not seeming to notice this last mysterious remark. 'Good thing we're just about ready.'

'It's just perfect to-night; if there had been a wind we couldn't have used the bulrushes for torches,' said Jill, standing in the doorway and looking down over the quiet lake. 'And we mightn't have been able to see the stars.' . . . 'But

they are always there, they are always there,' she added to herself, smiling happily as if at some sweet secret she alone possessed.

By the time the second bugle blew, the four friends had put on their ribbon headbands and draped their blankets about them in preparation for the evening's ceremony.

'Wait a moment, Jill,' said Gee, untying Jill's ribbon. 'Di and I thought that you should have a special headband in which to wear the tribal feather, so I've made you one. Di said I was to give it to you before we went down to the Council Fire.'

As she spoke Gee held out a band of blue leather on which she had sketched the special flower of the Ojibways, a lovely yellow iris.

'It's *too* beautiful, Gee,' said Jill earnestly, holding the pretty thing in her hand. 'And I don't deserve it, I don't see how I can possibly. . . .'

'Please, may we see you put it on,' came in an excited voice from outside, and Pop and Pip followed by Shem and Ham crowded into the little room.

'Oh — oh! Isn't it lovely! Doesn't it look — suitable!' said Pop, trying hard to get the right word.

Everybody laughed at this, and then hurried off

to join the rest of the tribe beside the big twin pines.

Twilight again, and silence, as the warriors stole noiselessly down the trails and took their places in the great circle. Then came the High Council, and last of all, Big Chief.

Jill had watched the assembling of the tribes many times now, but the coming of the Chief and her greeting to the braves never failed to thrill her with a sense of joyful expectancy.

She followed each part of the beautiful ceremony to-night with even more than her customary pleasure. It would be many months before she sat again with her fellow-tribesmen and fellow-campers in one big circle of friendship and loyalty.

'Let the fire-tenders come forth!'

Jill remembered how at her first Council Ring these four had just been shadowy forms, told off to feed the fire. Now even in the dim light she could see their faces and knew each one for a friend: Sheila who was always ready to take the heavy end of any difficult task, Nan whose singing had enlivened many a camp-fire, Ann who could tell the 'spookiest' ghost stories, and Dee who was such a good sport and a *dear* into the bargain.

Big Chief was reciting the now familiar lines:

'Kneel always when you light a fire!
Kneel reverently
And thankful be
For God's unfailing charity!'

The leaping flames lit up faces here and there in the big circle, and Jill joyously recognized one friend after another; and not only in the Ring but up on the Council seat where sat Judy and Dunsey, Docky and Babs and all the rest of them.

How interesting each person was, when one got to know her even ever so little! How splendid and wonderful when one became friends! Jill glowed as she thought of all the friends she had made that summer. Would anything in the whole world make up for the loss of Jan's loyalty, or Gay's affection or Big Chief's understanding words and trust? Nothing. Nothing could be more precious!

The usual ceremony of passing the pipe of peace was postponed to-night until the business of awarding feathers, cups, and pins had been concluded.

What a long list there was! First, the different colored feathers for achievements in nature-study, land sports, water sports, arts and crafts; Jill's headband was decorated with two of these, a red one for land sports and a green for nature-study.

Then Big Chief announced that the Cup for the neatest cabin would decorate the Pagoda next

year, and that the shield for the tribe which had contributed the finest piece of constructive work would belong to the Crees for their building of the outdoor theater.

Jill applauded heartily all these awards, but her attention wandered while Big Chief decorated with a gold feather pin each member of the High Council in recognition of their services to the Camp, and each camper who had won four honor feathers.

What magic loveliness there was in the night! Could anything be more beautiful than this beloved little valley with its singing stream, slim white birches, and leaping fire! Jill thought not. She looked out through the trees to the last soft glow of the sunset and back to the shadowy valley in a sort of happy dream. Next year and next she must come back, oh, yes, for many years. . . . Wouldn't Mum and Dad be glad when they saw how brown and well she looked. . . . And Cousin Sam would be surprised by the strength of her muscles. . . . How terrible if she had gone to Kennebec instead. . . . Was there anything she could do for Camp in return? . . . Next year she would work hard to pass all her swimming tests. . . . And for the Scroll, she'd try to put into beautiful words some of the thoughts Big Chief had inspired. . . . Why-ee — that was what she'd do, she'd be a

poet and write perfectly wonderful poems. . . . She'd give her whole life to writing. . . . She'd be very, very kind to young authors, and have white hair and wear distinguished-looking black clothes, and when she came into a room people would say, 'Who is that thoughtful-looking person?' . . . And some one would say, 'Don't you know? That's the famous poet. . . .'

There was a tremendous burst of applause and Di Harris was standing in front of Big Chief taking from her a silver cup.

Jill joined in the Ojibway call and then whispered to Jan, 'What for?'

Jan looked at her in amazement.

'The highest number of points for land and water sports,' she whispered. 'Listen, the Blue Feather is next.'

'Each year, my braves,' said Big Chief in her clear voice, 'we give to one of our number a Blue Feather, to be worn as a sign that we of the High Council of Camp Conqueror honor her for some outstanding feat of courage or endurance. This year there have been many battles fought and won, many quests of high endeavor crowned with success: some of these victories are known only to a few of us, some to the conqueror alone; one such achievement of courage and heroism we all know

and admire. Will Jill Grier come forward to receive the Blue Feather of Honor?'

The last words were almost drowned in a thunder of applause, but Jill had heard her name clearly enough, and Jan whispered, 'Go on, Jilly, they're waiting for you.'

So Jill stepped softly across the fire-lit circle and stood with shining eyes and glowing cheeks while Big Chief stooped down and fastened into the headband Gee had made, the Blue Feather of Honorable Achievement.

After that, who could doubt that the Ojibways would again hold the big loving-cup as a proof that they had won the highest number of points for their tribe? The other tribes generously and heartily approved. It had been a banner year for the Ojibways.

Then the pipe of peace was passed from Big Chief to counselors and from counselors to campers one after another, a symbol of peace and friendship, and Big Chief arose to speak to her children a farewell message.

All the faces turned from the firelight toward the Chief, and all hearts were open, ready for her words: she reminded them of the first Council Ring when they had passed the pipe of peace and laid their fagots on the council fire as symbols

that they would dwell together in peace and mutual helpfulness, that they would be loyal to tribe and camp, and share in all undertakings for the common good. This they had performed, each doubtless to the best of her ability, and many fine achievements would live in their memories. But much yet remained to be done: many battles must still be fought, many quests still be undertaken, many dreams be transformed to splendid reality.

One such dream had come true: through their generosity and self-denial Camp Conqueror Cabin at the Settlement Fresh-Air Camp would be built in the spring and ready for its happy occupants next summer, and plans for social service work at Christmas time were well under way.

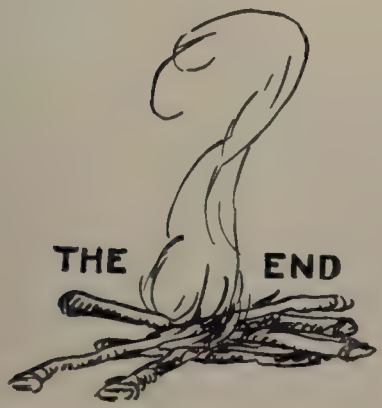
'For,' said Big Chief, 'Camp Conqueror girls have always realized that the privileges of their joyous life here bring also responsibilities: and you, my children, are nobly carrying on this fine tradition.'

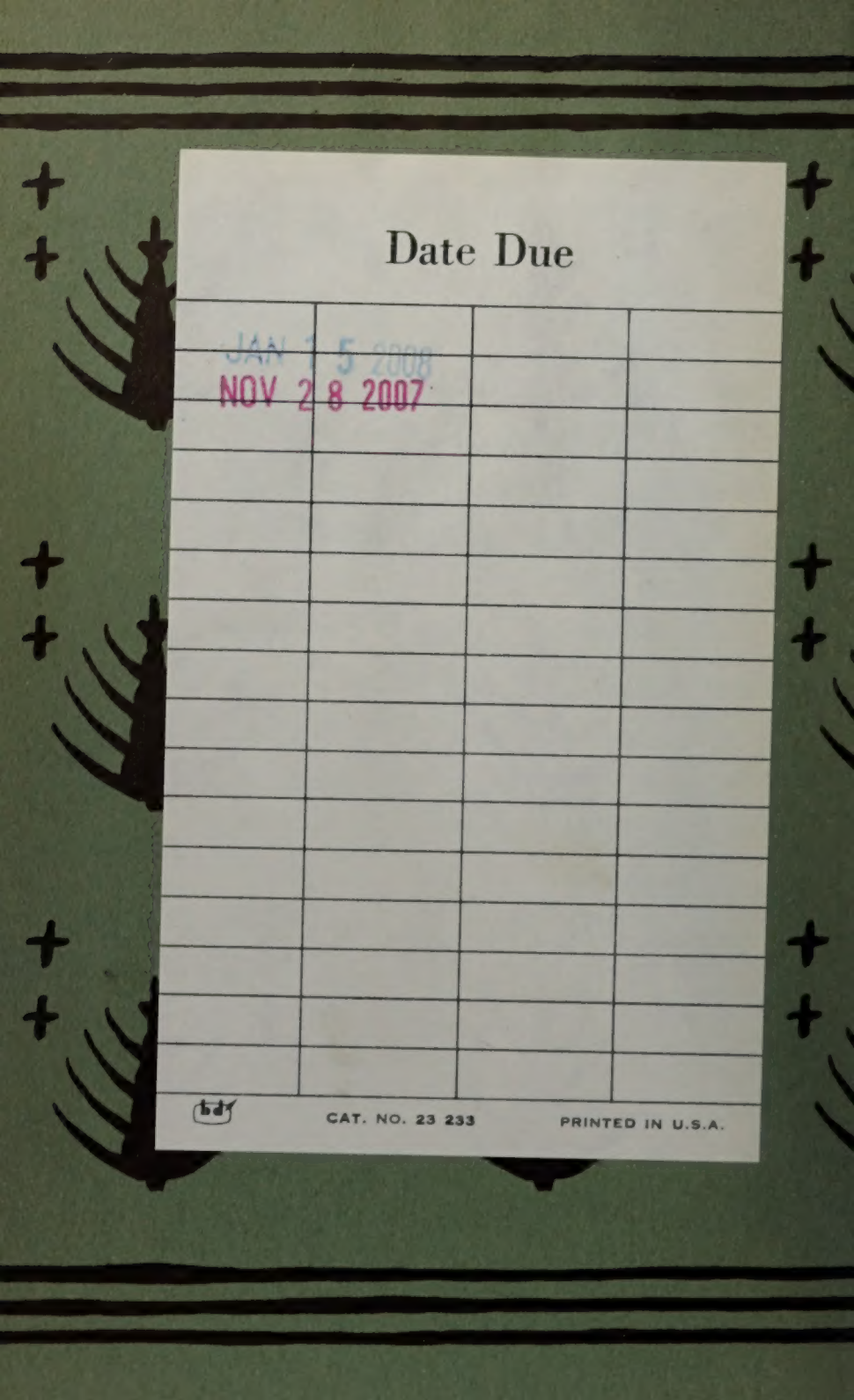
Jill thrilled to the closing words of conviction and vision when Big Chief reminded them that they did not fight without a Leader, nor follow a gleam without promise of a Great Light. She, too, knew that the fighting warrior had a great Unseen Captain by his side; she, too, had tested and proven His Friendliness and His Power. And as she stood

with the other campers looking at the stars her heart went up in a prayer of gratitude and loyalty to the Great Good Spirit, that mysterious Friendly Ruler of a mysterious Friendly universe.

Then she and all the members of the great Council Ring dipped their bulrushes into the fire, and, forming a lovely trail of glowing lights, wound about their beloved little valley and up the hillside, singing as they went:

'Follow, follow, follow the gleam,
Standards of worth o'er all the earth;
Follow, follow, follow the gleam
Of the light that shall bring the dawn.'

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